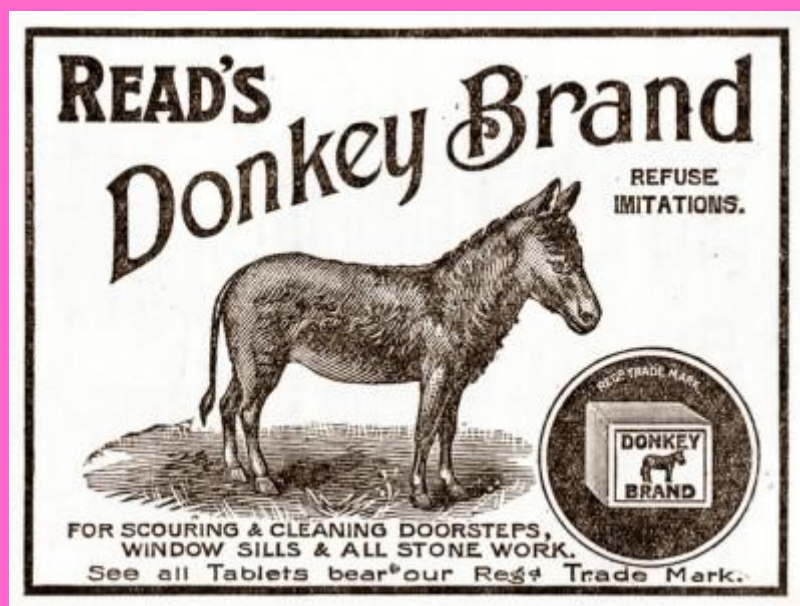


A Brief History of Donkey Stones



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Adlington, Lancashire

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Introduction

I must start with a confession. I have no particular interest in donkey stones. I am not a donkey stone enthusiast, nerd or geek. I have neither bought nor used donkey stones. I do not collect donkey stones or associated memorabilia. I do not claim to be an expert on the subject of donkey stones.

Then why have I written this brief history of donkey stones? Until very recently I did not give them much thought, though I recognised the production and use of donkey stones in the North of England as being part of our heritage, but also a fading memory.

I was prompted to look for a history of donkey stones after reading this statement in the *Manchester Evening News* of 1st July 1948:

“... the Flemish weavers who settled in Lancashire taught housewives to whiten their doorsteps, wear clogs, and use, it is said, characteristic words like "jannock," meaning genuine.”

The suggestion that Flemish weavers could have introduced the whitening of doorsteps to Lancashire was surprising. Weavers from Flanders are said to have settled in Lancashire at various dates, depending on the author. For instance, a date of 1337 is generally quoted for Bolton and 1363 for Manchester. Were Flemish weavers whitening doorsteps in the fourteenth century? (Did the houses of poor people such as weavers have doorsteps in fourteenth century Lancashire?) If the Flemings introduced whitening of doorsteps in the fourteenth century, or later, what did they use? Donkey stones, or something else?

I needed to answer these questions for a piece I am writing about the settlement of Flemish weavers in Lancashire. Lockdown as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic meant that I had access to research resources online, and on my own bookshelves, rather than in reference libraries or archives. It is possible that someone somewhere has done a doctorate on donkey stones, and that a thesis which would answer all of my questions has been placed in an archive to which I have not had access.

Online resources gave me access to censuses, parish records, county and city directories, telephone directories, electoral registers, newspapers, and old and current maps. My research would have been improved if I had paid for copies of birth, marriage and death certificates for individuals discussed in this text. However, I was not prepared to allocate a budget for such purchases because I am distributing the document free of charge as a PDF, mainly through relevant Facebook groups. I will post the PDF in family history Facebook groups so that anyone who has researched the families discussed in this history will have the opportunity to bring any potential errors to my attention, or to add additional information if they have used documents such as copy certificates to prepare their own family trees. Some aspects of the research would have been easier if the 1921 census had been available, but it will not be available online until 2022. I might revisit this brief history next year to resolve some issues, if the 1921 census has the answers.

What are “donkey stones”?

Before going further, I should mention that “donkey stones” are also known as hearth stones**, rubbing stones, scouring stones, scrubbing stones, and step stones. They were sold for the purpose of cleaning and colouring stone surfaces, such as doorsteps, window sills and hearths.

** To add to the confusion, hearth stones were used to make fireplaces, and the term was also used for the stones used to clean them. Both are sometimes called hearthstones.

The “Donkey Brand” of scouring stones was produced by Edward Read and Son of Manchester, and the name has become applied to all similar products in the same way that vacuum cleaners tend to be called Hoovers regardless of the actual make.

Advertisements placed by Edward Read and Son Limited implied that either the business or their product dated back to 1834. I shall examine the basis of that claim in this history.

Acknowledgements

Several web pages do present useful information about donkey stones. There is a page on Wikipedia, and a well-illustrated page about manufacturer Eli Whalley, of Ashton under Lyne, Lancashire, at the following web address:

<http://www.pittdixon.go-plus.net/donkey-stones/donkey-stones.htm>

It is worth visiting this website to see photographs of the equipment used to manufacture donkey stones.

Quotations from newspapers are courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive (<https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>), Papers Past (New Zealand), and the National Library of Wales.

Old map images are reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland (<https://maps.nls.uk/index.html>).

Thanks to Grace’s Guide to British Industrial History (https://gracesguide.co.uk/Main_Page) for advertisements for Read’s products dated 1907 and 1908.

Thanks to Donkeystone Brewing Co. of Saddleworth for permission to use its logo.

I circulated a first edition of this history in several Facebook groups earlier in April 2021, and received useful feedback in comments. Thank you to those who commented and in some cases inspired some additional research.

Thanks to Amazon.com for the Jumbo Pumie scouring brick and Poolmaster Pool Pumice Stone photographs. (Check Amazon.com for current availability if you need any.)

Last, but not least, my wife has found relevant content on web pages and in her own book collection.

Map of South East Lancashire, North East Cheshire and part of Derbyshire



Map 1 – Places in Lancashire, Cheshire, and Derbyshire referred to in the text

Cleaning of Stone Floors and Steps

Dr. Alan G. Crosby's "Lancashire Dictionary of Dialect, Tradition and Folklore" (Otley, 2000) provides a description of donkey stoning, also known as mop stoning. "It involved rubbing the front step with soft, coloured stone, after swilling down with water, so that the step appeared bright and fresh." The dictionary entry also cross-references to a description of "sand knocking", a term with which I was not familiar.

Crosby defined sand knocking as involving "crushing and grinding sandstones and gritstones into coarse powder, which was sprinkled on the floors of alehouses and butchers shops or, for domestic use, was scattered on a newly washed floor as a scourer. The sand was ground over the flags with a block of stone or a wooden block so that the stones were smoothed and whitened. This method was the forerunner of the donkey stone ..."

This practice was said to be known in parts of the Pennines such as Smallbridge, near Rochdale. The source of our knowledge is Edwin Waugh, born in Rochdale in 1817. He described sand knocking in his first book, "Sketches of Lancashire Life and Localities", which was published in 1855. It seems likely that the practice was still current in the mid-nineteenth century. Waugh's description follows. (I have split the narrative into paragraphs to make it easier to read.)



Map 2 – mid-nineteenth century Smallbridge, in the Pennines near Rochdale

There is a race of hereditary sand-sellers, or "sond-knockers," in Smallbridge; a rough, mountaineer breed, who live by crushing sandstone rock, for sale in the town of Rochdale, and the villages about it. This sand is used for strewing upon the flagged house floors, when the floor is clean washed; and while it is yet damp, the sand is ground over it by the motion

of a heavy "scouring-stone," to which a long, strong, wooden handle is firmly fixed, by being fastened to an iron claw, which grasps the stone, and is embedded into it by molten lead. The motion of the "scouring-stone" works the flags into smoothness, and leaves an ornamental whiteness on the floor when it gets dry; it breeds dust, however, and much needless labour.

The people who knock this sand and sell it, have been known over the country side for many years by the name of "Th' Kitters;" and the common local proverb, " "We're o' of a litter, like Kitter pigs," is used in Smallbridge, as an expression of friendship or of kinship. As regular as Saturday morning came, the sand-carts used to come into Rochdale, heavily laden; and I remember that they were often drawn by horses which, like the steed of the crazy gentleman of Spain, were "many-cornered;" and, often, afflicted by some of the more serious ills which horse-flesh is heir to. They have better horses now, I believe, and they are better used.

The train of attendants which usually accompanied these sand-carts into the town was of a curious description. Hardy, bull-necked, brown-faced drivers, generally dressed in strong fustian, which, if heavily plated with patches in particular quarters, was still mostly whole, but almost always well mauled, and soiled with the blended stains of sand, and spilt ale, and bacon fat, with clumsily-stitched rips visible here and there: the whole being a kind of tapestried chronicle of the wearer's way of living, his work' his fights, fuddles, and feasts. Then they were often bare-headed, with their breeches ties flowing loose at the knees, and the shirt neck wide open, displaying a broad, hairy, weather-beaten chest; and the jovial-faced, Dutch-built women too, in blue lin aprons, blue woollen bedgowns, and clinkered shoon; and with round, wooden, peck and half-peck measures tucked under their arms, ready for "hawpoths" and "pennoths."

As the cart went slowly along, the women went from house to house, on each side of the road, and, laying one hand upon the door cheek, looked in with the old familiar question, "Dun yo want ony sond this mornin'?" "Ay; yo may lev a hawputh. Put it i' this can."

It is tempting to consider the evolution of the heavy scouring stone with long wooden handle into the smaller scouring stones sold under the name of "Donkey brand".

A report in the *Bradford Observer* of 15th June 1953 confirms that the scouring of floors using a stone with a handle attached was not confined to Pennine Lancashire. The article is an interview with Mr. James Blewitt, of Aire View Farm, High Bradley, near Skipton, Yorlshire.

The floor of Mr. Blewitt's homestead is of flagstones and it has a slight slope, there being a fall of about 5in. all told—presumably to facilitate swilling out in the old days.

Huge scouring stone

In his garden he has dug up one of the huge scouring stones with which early occupants used to whiten the stone floor. This he showed me.

There are the rusted remains of the fastener into which a handle was fixed so that the use of the scouring stone could be facilitated.

Sanding of floors

Use of sand on workplace or domestic floors was not confined to one small place in Lancashire. Wikipedia gives several examples from many countries of “sandpainting”, the decoration of floors with sand.

One example of relevance to this study is as follows. “In the province of Drenthe in the Netherlands in the late 19th, early 20th centuries it was custom to use a stiff broom to sweep patterns in white sand to form simple decorations on the tiled floors of the houses, mostly for special occasions or celebrations. The next day it was swept up. This custom was also practised in Northern Belgium by the Dutch speaking communities ...” In other words, the use of sand on floors was known to the Flemish people of Northern Belgium.

Could the practice of cleaning stone floors with sand and the custom of sandpainting in the Low Countries be linked in any way? Is it possible that Flemish weavers introduced to Lancashire the use of sand as a cleaning agent? I will leave these questions unanswered for the time being.

When cleaning floors with sand, people would also grind it with their feet, and found that it made a satisfying noise. Some went a step further, and developed dances to be performed on sanded surfaces. Long before the days of Wilson, Keppel and Betty, British and American clog and step dancers were performing sand jigs. No doubt they started off as a way of entertaining family and friends, but the top dancers performed professionally, and some toured the world. It seems likely that such dances were a stage in the evolution of step dances into tap dancing.

An article in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* in 1950 gave an example of stone, rather than sand, being used in a decorative manner:

A Sandstone Tribute

THE paragraphs about scouring stones and doorstep artists have reminded a reader of the occasion years ago when, as Princess Mary, soon after her marriage to Lord Lascelles, the Princess Royal visited Whitby.

In the programme was a visit to the old church and abbey on top of the East Cliff, though not by climbing those famous 199 steps; her car would go up the steep road along-side The fisherfolk and shopkeepers living on the Church Street part of the way, anxious that their visitor should see the narrow street at its best, organised a general clean-up. Soft sandstone is plentiful in that district, and the housewives turned out and scoured a creamy causeway from the Bridge Street end of Church Street to the foot of the famous steps. Before the Princess passed many were the warnings pedestrians to “stride over” so as not to disfigure the work before she had noticed it; and fortunately it remained a fine day, for imagine what a heavy shower would have done to the brightened causeways on each side of the narrow road.

Yorkshire Evening Post, 31st August 1950

Scouring Stones

Website Old & Interesting gives a useful description of the use of sand for cleaning on the following page: <http://www.oldandinteresting.com/scrubbing-stones-sand.aspx> It also describes the types of scrubbing stones used with sand or instead of it.

“They could be plain chunks of abrasive stone. Otherwise these were generally mixtures of sand or pulverised stone or clay formed into brick-shaped "stones". Real building brick was also used. Flanders Tile, Flanders Brick, or Dutch Brick was imported into England from late medieval times and was a familiar cleaning tool. In 1684 "Flanders Tyle, to scour with" cost Irish importers £2 customs duty per 1000 pieces. In 18th and 19th century London Flanders tile and hearthstones were sold by street vendors with hand-carts.”

Until I started researching this history, I had never heard of Flanders Tile or Brick. Did the Manchester journalist in 1948 assume that it was the forerunner of the donkey stone and that it had been introduced into Lancashire by Flemish weavers? Though I have not seen records of Flanders Brick having been offered for sale in Lancashire, it was available in London in the early nineteenth century:

TO Oilmen, Grocers, and Chandlers, &c.--The WHITE FLANDERS BRICK Manufacturers have opened a Warehouse at Lamkin's Wharf, No. 10, Paddington Canal, where wholesale and retail dealers may be regularly supplied with any quantity, on the lowest terms.

Morning Advertiser, 26th September 1806

This brief piece from a Welsh newspaper of 1828 indicates that rubbing stones of unspecified origin were available in the early nineteenth century.

THE MARCH OF INTELLECT.--Good Grammar was not so much studied, as good cookery, by our grandmothers. At least, they used phrases which offend the ear of our times. One of the worthy ladies was accosted, the other day, at her own door, by a ragged, basket-girl, selling *rubbing stones*. “I don't want *none*, not I.” “Ma'am, if you don't want any, you might, at least, have spoken grammatically when saying so.”

The Carmarthen Journal and South Wales Weekly Advertiser, 29th August 1828

Scouring stones of unspecified manufacture were advertised in Lancashire, together with Bath Bricks.

SOFT STONES. SOFT STONES.--For Soft Scouring Stones, Blue Moulds, Bath Bricks, Pipe Clay, House Sand, Brown Stone, Pot Mould, &c., &c., go to HENRY SEDDON'S, 24, Canal-street, Ancoats, and 8, Canal-street, Oldfield-road, Salford, where your demands will be speedily supplied without loss of time. H.S. having made arrangements for an unlimited quantity of Soft Scouring Stones, is in a position to supply all comers on the shortest notice and most reasonable terms.--N.B. orders by post promptly attended to.

Manchester Evening News, 8th April 1881

It seems that Flanders Tiles and Bath Bricks had a similar purpose. In effect, they were the predecessor of the scouring pad used for cleaning and polishing. Wikipedia explains the use of the Bath Brick:

“The brick, similar in size to an ordinary house brick, could be used in a number of ways. A mild abrasive powder could be scraped from the brick and used as a scouring powder on floors and other surfaces. Powder could also be moistened with water for use on a cloth for polishing or as a kind of sand paper. Items such as knives might be polished directly on a wetted brick.”

Similar in some respects to scouring stones, but the intended use was different.

Purpose of Whitening Doorsteps with Scouring Stones

Was there ever a practical reason for the whitening of stone doorsteps with scouring stones? Using stones to clean oil from surfaces in mills make sense, and wanting to clean industrial grime from the front of houses is also understandable. A reader contacted the *Yorkshire Evening Post* in 1950 with an explanation passed down the family.

Doorstep Scouring

THE paragraphs about doorstep scouring have recalled to a reader a theory passed down in her family from before grandmother's day that it all began because in those days streets and the outsides of houses were badly lighted. So the edges of the steps were marked with scouring stone to make them show up better on a dark night. Competition among houseproud women extended the practice to the merely decorative scouring of window sills.

In those days there was also a good deal of scouring inside the house too. Cellar steps were scoured along the edge and sometimes down the front (also probably on account of dim lighting), and the really thorough Victorian housewife also scoured round the edge of the cellar floor to a depth of about six inches where floor and walls joined. The reader's own grandmother did this to the end of her days.

Yorkshire Evening Post, 28th August 1950

Nowadays somebody would be muttering “health and safety gone mad” by now, but the explanation is plausible. If using stones and sand to clean grease from flags and steps in mills makes sense, then why not marking the edge of steps to help avoid tripping in the dim light?

Pumice Stones

Donkey stones and pumice stones are distant cousins. Pumice is a volcanic rock, which “is created when super-heated, highly pressurized rock is violently ejected from a volcano” (Wikipedia). In Europe, the largest deposits are in Italy, Turkey, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, and Germany.

In Britain, the most common use is for personal care purposes, rather than household cleaning. A typical use of a pumice stone is the removal of dry and excess skin from the feet.

Scouring bricks made of pumice are available, and these do have some similarity to donkey stones. The Jumbo Pumie is described as follows by Amazon.com: “A jumbo size scouring brick for large

surface cleaning. Removes lime, scale, rust and paint from hard metals, porcelain, ceramic tile, concrete, masonry and stone work. Restores farm equipment, garden and workshop tools. Cleans pools and barbecues.”



“The Pumie Jumbo Pumice Stone is a great cleaner for bathroom, kitchen and toilet. Also called Pummus Stones, they can be used to clean and scour away lime, calcium and rust build up from the pool tile or on the spa. Also use as a toilet cleaner, for Cleaning Toilet Bowl Ring Removal - Bathtub Shower Sink and Tile Cleaner - Callous Remover - Glass Cooktop Cleaner - Oven Rack Cleaner and so much more.”

On the face of it, this product is much more versatile than the humble donkey stone. However, when donkey stones were at their peak of popularity in Britain, housewives tended not to need a product with which to clean their pool or spa tiles. A bathroom, rather than a tin bath in front of an open fire, would have been

considered a luxury!

Other similar pumice-based cleaning stones are available, such as the Poolmaster Pool Pumice Stone, a tile and concrete cleaner for pool and spa.

Amazon.com describes the Pool Pumice Stone as “For removing and cleaning hard water, mineral and mildew stains.

Works on ceramic tile, grout and concrete surfaces.” Just to be clear, it is “Not for use on vinyl liner pools or porcelain surfaces”.



Manufacturers of Rubbing or Scouring Stones

Early newspaper reports rarely name the manufacturers of rubbing or scouring stones. This Ulverston, Lancashire, advertisement placed in 1870 names the manufacturer – A. Lindow – and gives the product a brand name – Half Moon.

Ladies' and Gentlemen's Umbrellas,
Of Superior Silk (which does not cut itself),
ALWAYS in Stock, made to order. and covered anew.
—Broken articles of Glass, China, Marble. &c.. &c., nicely pieced, at small charges.
—Leather Leggings of every description. Ladies Satchels in great variety.
At A. LINDOW'S King St., Ulverston.
Manufacturer of and Dealer in Half Moon and Bath Rubbing Stones. 989

Soulby's Ulverston Advertiser and General Intelligencer, 24th March 1870

A. Lindow was by no means the first manufacturer of rubbing stones in Ulverston. In 1854, William Brocklebank, a grocer of Sparkbridge, advertised “a large quantity of OIL PLASTERS (or Rubbing Stones), of his own manufacture, which he is able to offer at a very low rate”. A few years later, in 1861, William Lindow of Ulverston was advertising “*Hard Scouring Stones, Crushed White Sand, and White Marking Stones, Sold Wholesale and retail*”.

By 1866, A. Lindow, a grocer of Sunderland Terrace, Ulverston, was advertising his umbrellas, and as a footnote identified himself as a “Wholesale Dealer in Rubbing Stones, Bath Bricks, &c.” By 1869 he had moved to King Street, Ulverston, and advertised “The Half Moon Rubbing Stones manufactured in Bridge Street”. Advertisements continued until early in 1871, and then stopped.



Map 3 – Ulverston town centre, showing King St., Buxton Place, Market Street, and Bridge St.

The use of the “Half Moon” name is interesting. Some housewives used to kneel on their doorstep and clear the flags of the pavement in front of the house as far as they could reach, leaving a clean “half moon” of pavement. This may have inspired Lindow’s use of the “Half Moon” name.

Adam Lindow was born in Lancashire North of the Sands, probably near Ulverston, in 1837. He was the son of Robert Tyson and Martha Baythrop. His father died some time before 1841, which is when Martha married William Lindow. Lindow was therefore the name of Adam’s stepfather, and he used the surname Tyson in official documents, such as registering the birth of his children.

In the 1841 census, William Lindow and family were living at Backbarrow near Ulverston. He was a Hardware Dealer. A Lancashire directory of 1846 places him in Hart Street, Ulverston, and he was a Marine Store Dealer. By 1851 William was a Rag Merchant, according to that year’s census. It is possible that he followed several trades at once, because a Lancashire directory of 1855 still places him at Hart Street as a Marine Store Dealer. Ten years later, the Lindows were living in Hart Street, and William was a General Dealer, as was Adam. William must have had an interest in farming as well, because his advertisements advertised hay for sale. He died in 1865.

The following year, Adam Tyson (or Lindow) married Agnes Hannah Armer. They had four children, born in Ulverston, Lancashire, namely, Henry (1867), William Rawlinson (1868), Maria (1869), and Richard (1871). Adam Lindow was listed as an Umbrella Maker in Market Street, Ulverston, in a Lancashire directory of 1869. In the 1871 census, Adam Lindow was an Umbrella Manufacturer, living at Butler’s Yard, Buxton Place, Ulverston. He is last mentioned in the local press in 1874, after which the family seems to have emigrated to Canada, after temporarily living in Barrow-in-Furness, Lancashire. This is confirmed by a letter to the local paper, published in 1886, sent by Adam Lindow from Hamilton, Canada. Unfortunately he did not mention which line of business he was pursuing over there.

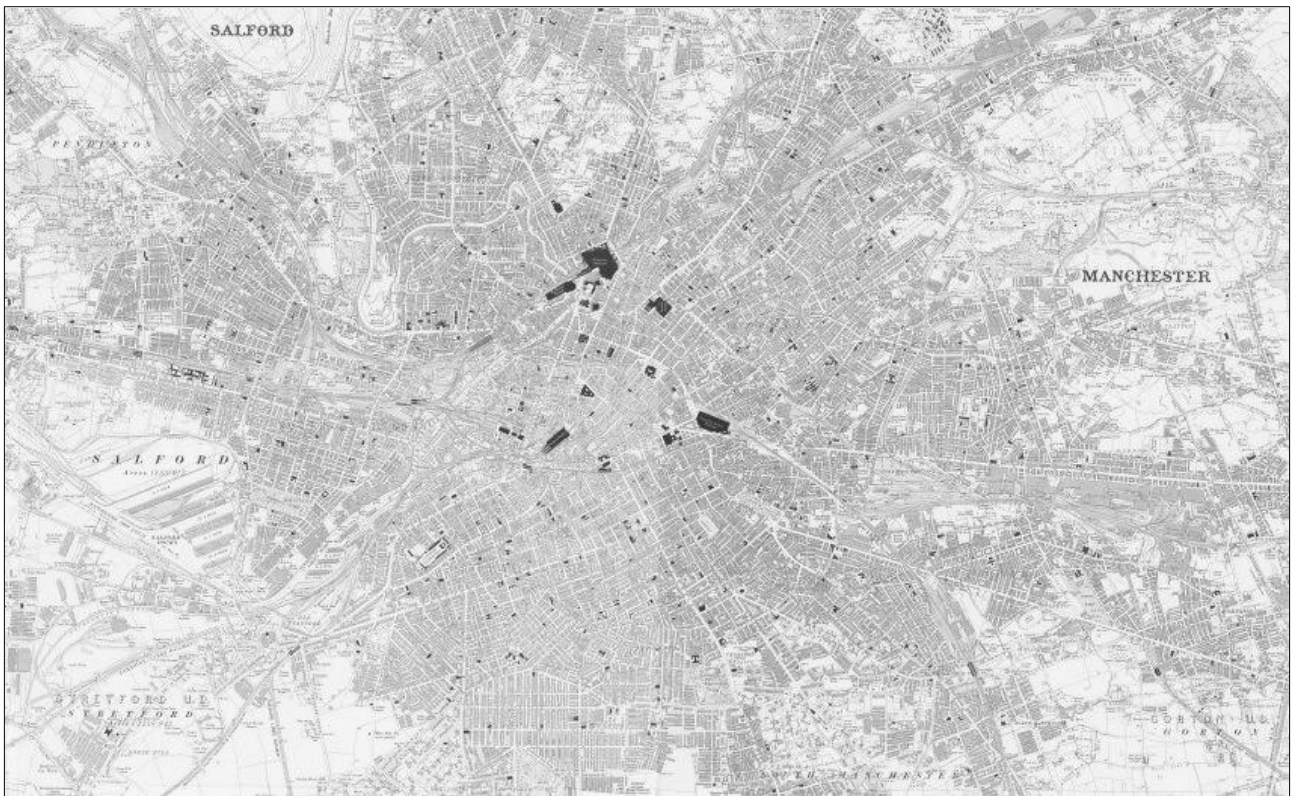
There were many other manufacturers of rubbing or scouring stones in Lancashire, and no doubt in other counties. Unfortunately trade directories did not include straightforward categories for such businesses. Had there been categories such as Rubbing Stone Manufacturers, or Scouring Stone Dealers, I might have mentioned a few more makers.

Instead, I have concentrated on the best-known maker – Edward Read & Son of Manchester, producer of the Donkey Brand products – and Eli Whalley of Ashton Under Lyne, whose business was the last commercial maker of scouring stones. When appearing in directories, they tended to be listed in categories such as Salt Grinders or Stone Merchants, though the Reads’ directory entries sometimes contained additional details. I have also included information about a rival of the Reads, who had premises in Manchester and a quarry in Hindley Green, very close to theirs in Westleigh.

Please excuse me if I appear to go off at a tangent at times, but I have aimed to provide biographical information about the people who produced donkey or other rubbing stones. In respect of the Bibbingtons, I have included details of their lime quarrying activities in Derbyshire to supplement the information currently available on the internet.

It is possible that several others businesses listed in directories in similar categories to the Reads and Whalleys were also makers of their own versions of rubbing stones. Identifying them would take a lot of additional effort, and would be beyond the scope of this brief history. Perhaps at some point in the future someone will write a complete history of donkey stones? I have no reason to think it would be me.

Edward Read & Son of Manchester



Map 4 – late nineteenth century Manchester, Lancashire

If you search for information about donkey stones on the Internet, the likelihood is that some results will confirm that “Donkey Brand” stones were produced by Edward Read and Son, of Manchester. Advertisements placed by this business suggest either that it was established in 1834, or that its products have been available since 1834.

Edward Read was born in Manchester, Lancashire in 1835, so he neither founded the business in 1834 nor invented donkey stones in that year. We must look at his father, Thomas Read, to consider his role in the creation and development of the business.

Thomas Read (1809 - 1870)

Thomas Read was born around 1809. In censuses he quoted his birthplace as being either Pendleton or Eccles, both in Lancashire. Pendleton by Salford was in Eccles parish, and should not be confused with Pendleton near Clitheroe, Lancashire.

Thomas Read first appeared in a newspaper report in March 1830, as a witness in a murder trial. The alleged murder took place at a fair in Salford on 17th November 1829. Read confirmed his occupation to be that of wheelwright, and his residence was in Manchester. He stated that he saw the victim fall down, and that “he was about my age, between 20 and 21 years of age.” This suggests that Thomas Read was born around 1809.

Later in 1830, Thomas Read married Margaret Walker at the Collegiate Church of St Mary, St Denys and St George, which nowadays we know as Manchester Cathedral. It was elevated to

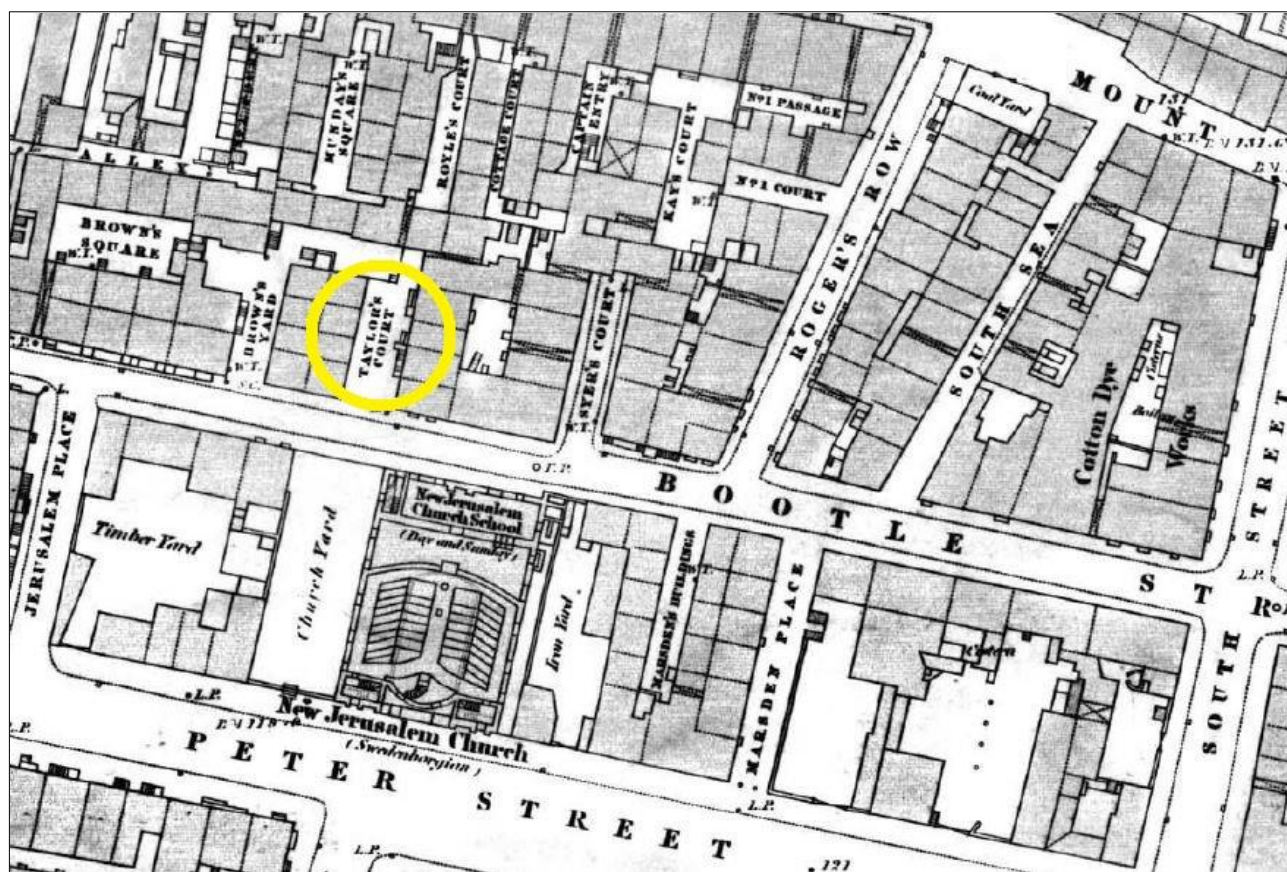
Cathedral status in 1847. From the 1841 census, we know that Margaret Walker was born in Lancashire around 1806, implying that she was a little older than Thomas. The 1841 census did not record precise ages for adults, and only confirmed whether or not people were born in the county of their residence, so her birthplace is not recorded.

The first child of Thomas and Margaret Read, John, was born a few months after the 1830 wedding. John's birthplace in censuses is recorded as being Whitefield, Lancashire, near Bury. It seems possible that his mother Margaret had family connections in Whitefield, and that may have been the place of her birth.

The other children of Thomas and Margaret read were Margaret (born 1833), Edward (1835), Richard Henry (1836), Sarah (1838), and Elizabeth (1840). Baptismal records for the children confirm that Thomas continued to work as a wheelwright during this period, and that his residence was in Manchester, though no precise address is recorded.

Some of the children died at a very young age. Margaret died in 1833, Richard Henry in 1837, and Sarah in 1840.

The 1841 census and a directory entry both confirm that Thomas Read's address was Taylor's Court, Bootle Street, shown on the following map of the 1840s.



Map 5 – 1840s Manchester, showing Taylor's Court off Bootle Street.

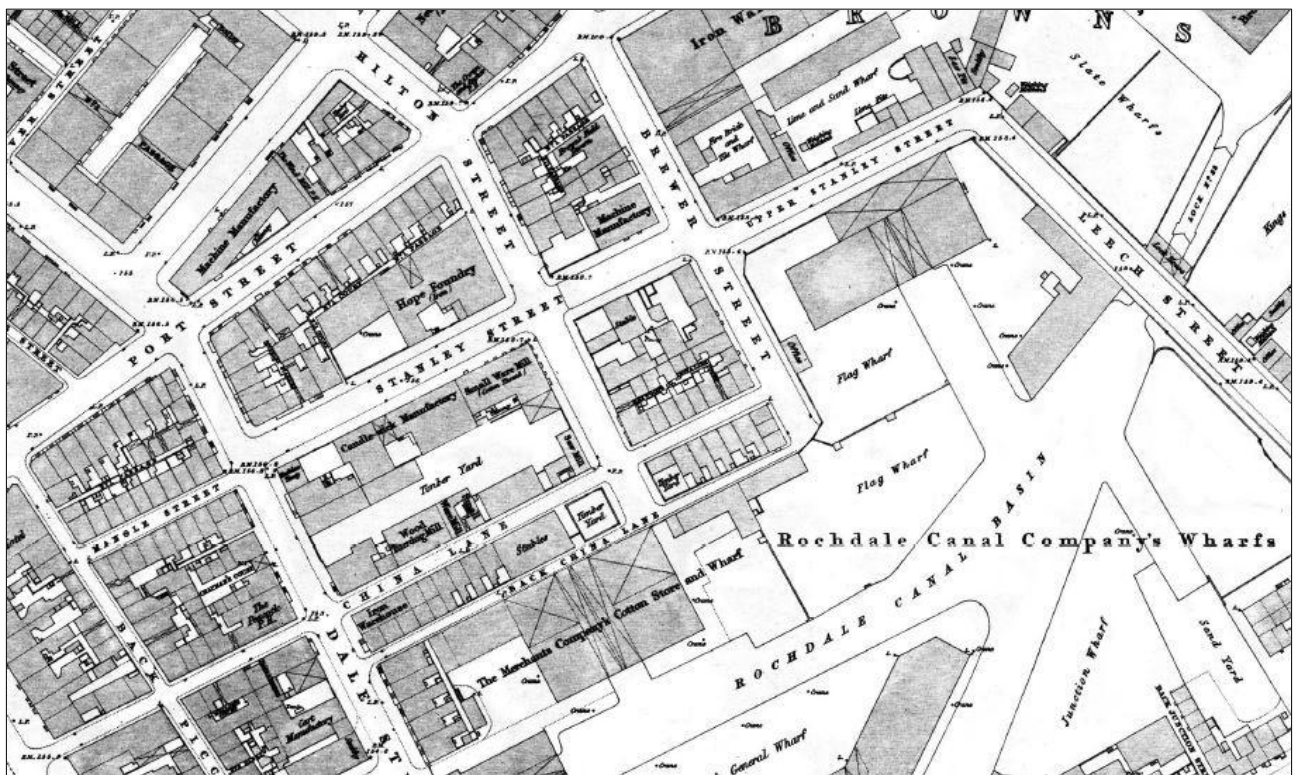
If you want a current landmark to refer to, the Sir Ralph Abercromby public house is at 35 Bootle Street, on the corner of Syer's Court, a matter of yards from Taylor's Court. The pub is said to have been built in the early nineteenth century, so it would have been known to Read, but there has been

extensive remodelling since his time. However, it is said to be the last building in the area remaining from the Peterloo Massacre of 1819, the story being that some of the wounded were taken to the pub.

Margaret Read died in 1846, leaving Thomas to raise the surviving children, John, Edward, and Elizabeth. He remarried towards the end of the year, his bride being Elizabeth Walker. She was born in Whitefield, Lancashire in 1812 and was the daughter of Richard and Betty Walker. It seems likely that she was related to Margaret Walker, but at present the relationship is not known.

Directory entries in 1846 and 1847 give Thomas Read's address as Peter Street, Deansgate, but also Mount Street, Peter Street, suggesting that he remained in the area of Manchester shown on the map for several years. In addition to his usual occupation of wheelwright, these directories also list him as a blacksmith and farrier. So far, no obvious connection to the production of donkey stones.

By the end of the decade, Thomas Read had relocated to what is known nowadays as Manchester's Northern Quarter. A directory of 1850 listed him as a wheelwright and smith, with a sand mill, in Hilton Street, and his home was at 26 China Lane. His home address is confirmed by the 1851 census, though it records his occupation as only being wheelwright and smith.



Map 6 – Hilton Street, China Lane, Port Street, Stanley Street, and Brewer Street in the 1840s

Read's business premises were close to the Rochdale Canal Basin. Proximity to the canal may have been a factor in his decision to relocate to this area.

In a directory of 1855 Read's business address was given as 51 Hilton Street, and his residential address was 56 Port Street. Throughout the 1850s, Thomas Read's occupation was stated to be wheelwright, though one directory mentioned the sand mill.

Looking at modern maps of Manchester, Stanley Street in the map on the previous page has been renamed Tariff Street. Assuming that numbering in the 1850s was approximately the same as it is now, 51 Hilton Street would have been on the east side, between Port Street and Stanley Street. 56 Port Street would have been on the south side of the street, between the junctions with Hilton Street and Brewer Street. Notable landmarks on the opposite side of Port Street to Thomas Read's residence are the Crown and Anchor and the Port Street Beerhouse, the former being contemporary with Read.

In 1860, Thomas Read placed the following advertisement.

THOMAS READ, Wheelwright and Smith, 51, Hilton-street, Oldham-street, Manchester.
Has always on hand Bale and Cotton Trucks, made of the best materials.
N.B. IMPORTER OF PATENT SCOURING BRICKS.

Manchester Times, 7th January 1860

The implication is that Read's main business was producing trucks or carts for Manchester's cotton mills, but for the first time he is connected with the importation, rather than production, of patent scouring bricks. In a directory of 1863 he is listed with the sand grinders and dealers, and also as a wheelwright, smith, and sand grinder, and importer of patent scouring bricks. No brand name is mentioned for the scouring bricks, nor any country of origin. Even Flanders cannot be ruled out as the source of the scouring bricks.

The following intriguing advertisement appeared in 1861.

NOTICE OF REMOVAL.—WE, the undersigned, THOMAS READ AND CO., Stone Proprietors, Hindley Green, DO HEREBY GIVE NOTICE that we are REMOVING from the SPRINGFIELD STONE QUARRY, and all persons claiming any account from us are desired to send in the same to our Agent, PETER THOMASON, at Hindley Green, as early as possible in order that it may be settled.
THOMAS READ & Co., July 6, 1861. Stone Proprietors, Hindley Green.

Leigh Chronicle and Weekly District Advertiser, 20th July 1861

By 1861, Edward Reid would have been in his mid twenties, and no doubt had begun to play a significant role in his father's business. Perhaps this is why the business is referred to as "Thomas Read & Co."? Up to this point there has been no mention of a connection to the stone business, or to Hindley Green (near Wigan, Lancashire), but I will present evidence to confirm the likelihood that this advertisement was placed by Thomas Read of Manchester.

A further advertisement placed in the 1860s confirms that Thomas Read remained a wheelwright, whatever his involvement in the stone and sand trade, presumably continuing to make carts for Manchester's cotton mills.

WANTED, a good WHEELWRIGHT.--Apply to THOMAS READ, 53, Hilton street, Manchester.

Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, 13th September 1865

In a directory of 1869, Thomas Read & Co. were listed as being stone dealers at Springfield Quarry, West Leigh, which is near Leigh, Lancashire, but also near Hindley Green. It is not clear whether this is the same Springfield Quarry from which the business removed in 1861. Did the Reads return to that quarry, or rename another quarry in the same part of Lancashire?

This following report from 1869 involves a man named Unsworth, who lived in Westleigh and dealt in rubbing stones. Was he a rival to the Reads' business, or perhaps he bought his rubbing stones from them?

THEFT FROM THE PERSON.—James Tilley, a stranger, who stated he came from Warrington, was charged with having, on the previous Saturday, stolen one shilling from the person of a boy named John Grayson, of Westleigh.—The Chief Constable stated that Grayson was in the employ of a man named Unsworth, who lived at Westleigh and dealt in rubbing stones. On the day named the prisoner was sent along with the boy in charge of a cart, Unsworth's instructions being that Tilley should assist in selling, but that Grayson should receive all money. Instead of carrying out this arrangement, however, prisoner took the whole of the money, with the exception of a shilling which was in the possession of his companion, who refused to give it up. Prisoner then threw Grayson down in the cart, and forcibly took the coin. Subsequently he disappeared, and had not yet given up to Unsworth the money taken during the day, which amounted to about 15s. He was not proceeded against for taking this, but the magistrates sent him to prison for a month for stealing the shilling.

Wigan Observer and District Advertiser, 5th February 1869

Thomas Read died at West Leigh, Lancashire, in 1870. He was buried in Pendleton, Lancashire. The parish burial record recorded his place of residence as being Westleigh. This confirms that he had moved from Manchester to supervise the operation of the quarry. When probate was granted, Read was described as a sand grinder. There was not a census while read was living in West Leigh, but in the 1871 census his widow Elizabeth was recorded as living in "Jacobs Well", West Leigh, which seemed to be near Park Lane, which led from Nel Pan Lane to a quarry. Her occupation was "In Stone Trade". There was a Jacob's Well Farm on Westleigh Lane, with access to the quarries at the end of Park Lane via Abbey Lane. It is possible that this farm was owned by the Reads.

Though records do not show any direct connection between Thomas Read and donkey stones, his diversification from being only a wheelwright to being a sand grinder, stone dealer, and importer of patent scouring bricks must have influenced the development of the Reads' most famous product. It is not clear whether he supplied sand and scouring stones to Manchester's cotton mills, though it is tempting to think that stone steps and floors in the city's mills were cleaned the same way as those in a Pennine village such as Smallbridge, home of the sand knockers. Whether Thomas Read moved on from importing scouring stones to manufacturing them is not clear, but his Westleigh quarry would have been a potential source of material.

A later generation dated the business to 1834. This might have been a guess as to when Thomas Read first moved to Manchester from Pendleton, being a year before the birth of Edward Read, though we know that he was in Manchester by 1830. Was there an assumption that he produced donkey stones as soon as he arrived in Manchester, even though he was working as a wheelwright at that time? Or did 1834 refer to the date when the imported patent scouring bricks were first made? I suspect this will never be resolved, though I would be pleased if someone took up the challenge and proved me wrong.

Edward Read (1835 - 1892)

Edward Read, second son of Thomas and Mary, was born in Manchester about 1835. He was baptised at the Collegiate Church in January of that year, but it is possible that he was born late in 1834.

In 1854 Edward married Sarah Southwood at the Cathedral. Sarah was the daughter of Joseph Southwood, and she was born in Manchester around 1835. Edward's occupation at the time of the marriage was Smith, and he gave an address of Scott Street, Ancoats, which is in Manchester.

Edward and Sarah had a large family. Known children are Mary Elizabeth (born 1855), Emma Elizabeth (1857), Thomas Edward (1859), John Henry (1861), Edward (1865), Sarah (1867), Joseph Edward (1870), Albert Edward (1873), and Ellen (1876). Mary Elizabeth was baptised at the Cathedral in 1855, her father's occupation being recorded as Blacksmith, but she does not appear with the family in the 1861 or any subsequent censuses. Some of her siblings died at a very young age, John Henry in 1862, Edward in 1866, and Ellen in 1876. Emma Elizabeth married John Penkett in 1877, but died in 1880, when their second daughter was born. Sarah married James Schofield in 1888, but died in 1894 when she was about 27 years old.

The 1861 census shows that Read had moved to Stanley Street, close to his father's home and business premises, and that he was a Blacksmith. A baptismal record of the same year shows his occupation to be Wheelwright, suggesting that he was working for Thomas Read. By 1867 his residence was given as Hilton Street.

Towards the end of the 1860s, like his father, Edward Read began to diversify. A directory of 1869 lists him both as a Sand Grinder and Dealer and a Retailer of Beer, at 57 Hilton Street. This was probably both his residence and a beer house. Nineteenth century beer houses only sold beer, unless given permission by the authorities to sell wine and spirits. Unlike inns or taverns, they were not named in trade directories, but their proprietors would be listed as Retailers of Beer. Such premises might be one or two rooms at the front of a residential property, the beer being produced from a cellar or the rear of a house, rather than being served at a bar counter. Beer houses were sometimes given informal names by their proprietors, which would be used by their customers but not by the authorities.

Read's father had moved to Westleigh during the 1860s, so Edward would have been managing operations in Manchester by that time. Thomas Read died in 1870, and Edward carried on the business with the assistance of his sons.

Edward Read was recorded in the 1871 census as being a Stone Merchant, living at "Hamlet Prince of Denmark", Hilton Street. The beer house's name was sometimes shortened to "Prince of Denmark". Throughout the 1870s he is recorded as having several occupations, specifically Retailer of Beer, Sand Grinder and Dealer, and Stone Merchant, at 53, 57 and 59 Hilton Street.

In 1857, he applied successfully to be allowed to sell wine at 57 Hilton Street, as recorded by two Manchester newspapers.

... Successful applications were only made by the following persons : Edward Read, beer retailer, 57, Hilton-street [for permission to extend premises] ...

Manchester Times, 2nd September 1876

The following applications have been granted :- ... Edward Read, beer retailer, 57 Hilton-street, Port-street (wine extension) ...

Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, 2nd September 1876

Two newspaper reports, about incidents relating to the Reads' stone quarries in Westleigh in 1872 and 1874, raise some interesting points relevant to the history of the business.

Accident in a Stone Quarry at Westleigh.— An accident, which was fortunately not attended with any serious results, occurred on Friday last at the Westleigh stone quarry, in the occupation of the executors of the late Thomas Reed [sic]. About eleven o'clock that morning, a labourer, named Dennis Lynch, who had lodged in Vernon-street, Leigh, was working in the delph, when a small quantity of stone became detached from the side of the quarry, just over the place where he was engaged, and before he could get out the way he was struck on the head. The poor fellow fell to the ground insensible, and it was feared at the time that he was killed, but on his being taken up it was found that the injuries which he had sustained were comparatively slight. Dr. Evans, who happened to be passing at the time, examined the man and found that his leg was broken. He was subsequently removed to the Manchester Infirmary, where he is now rapidly recovering. The injured man had only been employed at the quarry a few days, and was a complete stranger in the neighbourhood. We are informed that this is the first accident which has occurred at the quarry for many years past.

Leigh Chronicle and Weekly District Advertiser, 23rd March 1872

News of this sad incident in 1874 appeared in many newspapers in England and Wales, but this report published in Bradford, Yorkshire, gives a little more detail than most.

PLAYING WITH GUNPOWDER. SHOCKING ACCIDENT TO A BOY.

On Saturday morning, an accident of a frightful nature, which will probably terminate fatally, happened to a lad about 14 years of age, named Thomas Green, of Warrington. He left Warrington that morning in company with two other boys about his own age, in charge of a donkey cart laden with rubbing stones, and arrived at Tamer Lane End, Westleigh, about nine o'clock. While at the stone-delf of the executors of Mr. Thomas Reed [sic], the boy Green clandestinely filled his pocket with blasting powder, and after leaving he bought a box of lucifer matches. He and his companions then went to Jannock Brow, for the purpose, as they said, of having some sport. A quantity of powder was spread upon the ground, and Green struck a match to ignite it. and whilst he was in a sloping position the blaze also set fire to the powder in his trousers pocket. He was instantly enveloped in flames, and his piteous cries brought to his aid two men named Charnock and Rigby, who immediately stripped him of his burning clothes. The lad, who was shockingly scorched about the legs and body, was taken to the Bowling Green Inn, Westleigh. where his charred body was dressed. He was afterwards removed to the Leigh Workhouse where he now lies in a precarious condition**.

Bradford Daily Telegraph, 12th October 1874

**** Later reports confirmed the death of the unfortunate child.**

The executors of Thomas Read appointed in June 1870 were James William Gatley, of 15 Greek Street, Rusholme Road, Manchester, and George Edward Mellor, a schoolmaster of 57 Myton Street, Hulme, Manchester. The latter married Read's daughter Elizabeth in 1864. It is not clear why the Read stone business in Westleigh was still in the hands of the executors in 1874, or why Edward Read was not an executor of his father's estate.

This story is also interesting because it describes unnamed rubbing stones being delivered by donkey cart to Westleigh from Warrington, Lancashire. Does this imply that the rubbing stones were still being imported, rather than being made in Manchester?

By the end of the 1870s, the business was being described as Edward Read and Son, as shown in this advertisement.

SALT. SALT. SALT.
EDWARD READ & SON,
CENTRAL SALT DEPOT,
HILTON-STREET and STANLEY-STREET.
E. R. & S. have always in Stock large quantities of every description of Salt. Wholesale and Retail.

Manchester Evening News, 11th January 1879

Thomas Edward Read was about twenty years old by this time, and it seems likely that he was beginning to play an important role in the family business.

The 1881 census confirmed Edward Read's residence to be 57 Hilton Street ("Prince of Denmark"), and that he was a Stone Merchant. During the 1880s, he continued to have multiple occupations, as before, in particular Salt Merchant, Stone Merchant, and Beer Retailer.

Sarah Read died in 1881. She was about 46 years old. Edward and Sarah's children still living at home that year were Sarah, Joseph Edward, and Albert Edward. Also their granddaughter, Sarah Penkett, was living with them, following the death of her mother in 1880.

Business activities in 1882 might have been hindered by the loss of a delivery book, so a reward was offered for its safe return.

5S. REWARD.—LOST, a CARTER'S DELIVERY BOOK : anyone bringing the same will have the above reward. EDWARD READ & SON, 57, Hilton-street, Manchester.

Manchester Evening News, 6th October 1882

Edward Read remarried in 1883, his bride being Sarah Buckley, a widow. Sarah was born in Manchester in about 1845.

Directory entries in 1883 still listed Edward Read as being a Stone Merchant and Retailer of Beer at 57 Hilton Street, but more detail was provided about the business, Edward Read & Son. They were "Salt, plaster, Bolton polish, chalk, & rag merchants, stone, sand, whiting, cement, soda & ultramarine blue merchants" at Central Salt Depot, Hilton st. Stanley st. and at Ratcliffe st.

Stockport. Also “Stone Merchants & Quarry Owners (& sand & cement)” at Hilton st. Stanley st. & Ratcliffe st. Stockport; quarries, West Leigh.



Map 7 – Ratcliffe Street, Stockport, Cheshire

The Reads seem to have had premises in Ratcliffe Street, Stockport, only during the 1880s. The street is off Wellington Road South. The location of the Reads’ premises is currently unknown, and their presence in Stockport seems to have ended by the 1890s.

Scouring stones in general, or donkey stones in particular, are not mentioned in relation to the Hilton Street/Stanley Street premises, but all of the essential ingredients were available. In addition, for the first time, the Reads described themselves as rag merchants. It is part of the folk history of Northern England that rag and bone men, who went round the terraced streets of mill towns with their carts, sometimes drawn by donkeys, paid for materials offered to them with donkey stones. Is it possible that the Reads started this practice in the early 1880s?

It is more likely that they adopted an established practice. A report of a trial in the *Bolton Chronicle* of 22nd July 1848 confirms that it was known long before the Reads said they were rag merchants. In that case, four iron chairs were stolen from a railway company, and they were given to a rag dealer in exchange for rubbing stones.

Whenever this practice started, it was regarded as a Lancashire custom by the mid-1890s, as this article in a Welsh newspaper of 1895 demonstrates. It was a “filler” article which appeared with minor variations in many newspapers around that time, and no doubt helped to reinforce the association of rag and bone men with scouring stones.

WEIGHT FOR WEIGHT

In Lancashire a custom prevails of street-vendors exchanging domestic articles—such as salt, scouring stones for cleaning purposes, etc.—for their weight in old rags or bones. They also vend air balloons, which are remarkably light in weight, as well.

The other day, in a street in one of the large Lancashire towns, a rag-gatherer, after stopping his barrow and blowing his anything but sweet sounding horn, began calling out :

“Any owd rags or bones; come along, weight for weight.”

A little boy ran up with a bundle of rags, which the man weighed, and then asked :

“Neaw then, me lad, what’ll tha have for ‘em?” There’s four peawnds (pounds). Will tha have it i’ salt, pipeclay, or scouring stones?”

“Noew,” answered the lad; “aw’ll have it i’ balloons.”

Denbighshire Free Press, 24th August 1895

A few years later, a New Zealand Newspaper – the Star of Christchurch – described the activities of the rag and bone man. Though not specified, I assume the following refers to England. Readers of British origin or descent in New Zealand were always keen to be reminded of “Home”.

Who has troubled to make inspection of the crazy cart, drawn by a dilapidated donkey, of one of those raven-voiced “snappers-up of unconsidered trifles” who frequent our back streets and country villages, to barter “donkey-stones,” salt and sand for household refuse? Unsavoury as it is, the rag and bone man's store repays inspection. Among the contents of a typical barrow, we may enumerate the following: Old shoes, kettles, rabbit-skins, horse-hair, a bird cage, bottles, bones, sardine and other tins, a sack of rags and newspapers, old iron, a portmanteau, a cradle, and an iron bedstead. The cart was in keeping with the mournful company, and the donkey seemed to ask with expressive eye, what might be the ultimate destination of his weary carcass. On this point, however, we have no information to impart, since it is proverbial that no one ever saw a dead donkey.

Star (Christchurch), 16th March 1907

The Reads’ business appeared to be prospering, but Edward was living in a dangerous area, as this report from 1884 indicates.

IMPUDENT GOLD WATCH ROBBERY.

Edward Smith rough-looking fellow, was charged, before Messrs. Galloway and Ferguson, with stealing a gold watch, value £25, the property of Mr. Edward Read, stone merchant, residing at 57, Hilton-street, city.—Complainant said that on the night of the 15th inst. he was walking home in company with his wife along Port-street, when he observed the prisoner and a companion standing at the entrance to a passage opening to the street. As he passed them, prisoner suddenly sprang upon him, seized his watch, and was making off with it when he (complainant) tripped him up, and prisoner fell to the ground, but before he could procure assistance prisoner regained his feet and made his escape with his companion down a “blind alley.” Prosecutor then went into a spirit vault in the immediate neighbourhood and got a number of men to assist in securing the prisoner. These men went down the alley, and shortly afterwards met prisoner's accomplice, who deceived his would-be captors by assuring them that he would assist in the capture of the thief by “going to look for a policeman!” The *ruse* succeeded, and he escaped. When prisoner was shortly afterwards

"collared," and handed over to the care of Police-constable Crawshaw, no watch was found in his possession. Mrs. Reed [sic] having given corroborative evidence, prisoner was committed for trial at the assizes.

Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, 26th January 1884

By comparison, the loss of horse-cloths and nosebags in Westleigh was a minor distraction.

REWARD, 10s.–LOST, 23rd inst., TWO HORSE-CLOTHS and TWO NOSEBAGS, marked "E. R. and S., W. L." Apply E. READ & SON, 57, Hilton-street, City ; or E. READ & SON, Stone Quarry, West Leigh.

Manchester Evening News, 28th January 1884

The report on the sentencing of Edward Smith, the rough-looking fellow, quoted 17th January as being the date of the offence, though the original report stated 15th January. This reminds us that newspapers are not always consistent and accurate.

... Edward Smith (not in the calendar), charged with stealing a gold watch from the person of Mr. Edward Read, stone merchant, living in Hilton-street, Manchester, on the night of 17th of January, was found guilty and was sentenced to be imprisoned for twelve months with hard labour.

Manchester Evening News, 29th January 1884

Edward Read & Son were described in a directory of 1886 as being "Salt, sand & rag merchants" at "Hilton st. Stanley st. & at Ratcliffe st. Stockport"; also "Stone Merchants & Quarry Owners" at "53 Hilton st. Stanley st. quarries, West Leigh".

A report of a court case in 1887 demonstrates that the Reads had an involvement in farming, as well as stone quarrying, in Westleigh.

WILFUL DAMAGE TO OATS.–A boy named Alexander Neiles was charged with doing wilful damage to oats in Nel Pan-lane, Westleigh, belonging to Messrs. Edward Read and Son. The case was brought up last week when the boy's mother appeared for him, but it was adjourned in order to have the lad present. – P.C. Millner proved having caught the lad in the field pulling the growing oats, the damage to which was put down at one shilling. – The boy was ordered to pay 1s. and costs and 1s. damage.

Leigh Chronicle and Weekly District Advertiser, 22nd July 1887

The Reads continued to advertise for employees for their stone quarries in Westleigh.

WANTED, Two Steady CARTERS.–Apply Edward Read and Son, stone quarries, West Leigh, Lancashire.

Manchester Evening News, 27th February 1890

In August 1890, Edward Read and Son of Westleigh Stone Quarries appeared in Leigh County Court as defendant in a case brought by James Appleton, former quarry manager for the business.

“The action was brought to recover damages for the unlawful entry of the plaintiff’s house by the defendant and injury to the plaintiff’s furniture.”

James Appleton had been foreman of the Reads’ stone quarries near Leigh for about ten years. He had been taken on by Edward Read because he had worked for his father in the past. During Appleton’s time as manager, the Reads bought two small farms in the area, and he was placed in charge of them. The Reads built a house on one of the farms, and Appleton was given possession of it, in effect living as a servant in his master’s home. Appleton became ill in December 1889, and in the following July the Reads informed him that they did not require his services any longer. He was told to quit the farmhouse a week from the date of his notice. Appleton argued that notice should have been a fortnight, and this seemed to have been accepted by the Reads.

The day before notice had been due to expire, Appleton went to Newton Races. On his return in the evening, “he saw his wife and children and the furniture in the street and his house locked up.” There was a delay before the Appletons could find another residence, and some furniture was damaged through being left in the rain, in addition to damage allegedly caused by the Reads’ employees. The damage caused by the latter was estimated by an estate agent to be £20.

It was claimed that Edward Read himself was drunk when he initiated the eviction, and that his men were also given beer while evicting the Appletons.

Thomas Edward Read and Albert Edward Read spoke in defence of their father. The Reads had become unhappy about Appleton’s performance, had appointed a replacement manager, who was ready to start and needed the farmhouse. Edward Read was sober on the day of the eviction, as were his men, who removed the furniture carefully. The judgement was in favour of the defendants, with costs.

It seems likely that the manager appointed to replace James Appleton was William Morritt, and I shall discuss him presently. First I shall say a little more about the life and career of the unfortunate James Appleton. What sort of person becomes a quarry manager?

James Appleton

James Appleton was born in Rainford, Lancashire, in 1842. He was the son of Richard Appleton and Martha Marland. Richard Appleton worked in coal mining, and by 1861 James was also a coal miner, still living in Rainford.

In 1863, Appleton married Martha Dewhurst (or Dewhirst), who was born in Failsworth, Lancashire, in about 1841. We can track the family’s movements from the birth and baptismal records of the children. Where available, the latter also name the father’s occupation, and James Appleton did have a varied working life. James and Martha had eleven children. Elizabeth was born in Manchester, Lancashire, in 1864; Martha Ann in Liverpool, 1865; Sarah Ellen, Westleigh, 1867; Mary Alice, Westleigh, 1868; James, Westleigh, 1870; Robert Allen, Westleigh, 1872; William, Westleigh, 1874; James, Leigh, 1877, Samuel, Hindley, 1878; Thomas, Leigh, 1883; and John Richard, Leigh, 1885. Copy birth certificates should confirm specific addresses.

These births confirm that the Appletons had moved to Westleigh by 1867. During their time there, daughter Elizabeth died in 1871, Mary Alice in 1874, and first son James in 1875.

After leaving Rainford, James Appleton had a short career in the early 1860s as a Police Officer in Knotty Ash, near Liverpool. In 1865 he was noted as being an Omnibus Checker in Knotty Ash. By 1867, the family had moved to Westleigh. Copy birth certificates for the children born there would confirm whether he started working in a quarry straight away. The 1871 census does confirm that he was working as a Lime Keeper at Stone Quarry, and living at Wigan Road, Westleigh. This was probably not the Reads' quarry because in 1872, as will be discussed in the following chapter, he was quarry manager for the Wilds' Hindley Green quarry. By 1881, Appleton had left the stone quarry, and for a while was a Blacksmith, living at 780 Oldham Road, Newton, Manchester. However, it was not long before the Appleton family returned to the Leigh area, when James did become manager of the Reads' quarry.

As the legal case in Leigh County Court indicated, James Appleton had become ill in 1889, before being dismissed by the Reads and evicted from his home. He did not live long afterwards, his death being recorded in the Leigh area in the first quarter of 1891.

Retirement of Edward Read

In the late 1880s, Edward Read continued to give his occupation as Stone Merchant, but by 1891 – at the age of 56 – he had retired to Southport, Lancashire. In that year's census he was described as “living on own means”. It seems likely that ill health forced his retirement from the business because he died in Southport in 1892.

Up to the time of Edward's death, there is still no firm evidence that Edward Read & Son produced and distributed the scouring stones which came to be known as donkey stones. However there is evidence that the business had the means to do so. Unfortunately trade directories did not have a category of “Scouring Stone Manufacturers and Dealers”. Such a category would have made this study much easier, and would have enabled rival manufacturers to be identified.

Following Edward's death, the business continued to trade as Edward Read & Son, under the management of Thomas Edward Read.

Thomas Edward Read (1859 - 1900)

Thomas Edward Read was the first son of Edward Read and Sarah Southwood. He was born in Manchester in 1859, and was baptised at the Cathedral.

When he married Annie Wainwright in 1881, he was living at 57 Hilton Street, which was his father's home. His occupation was recorded as Merchant. Annie was the daughter of Joseph and Hannah Wainwright, and she was born in Penistone, Yorkshire. After marrying, Thomas Edward and Annie lived at 31 China Lane, off Hilton Street. The 1881 census and other records of the early 1880s show Thomas Edward's occupation as Stone Merchant, General Merchant, and Publican. By 1885, Thomas Edward was back at 57 Hilton Street, and was a Licenced Victualler. He was also recorded as being a General Dealer and “Salt, &c. merchant (E. Read & Son) & beer retailer”. Like his father, he had an interest in more than one trade at any time.



Map 8 – Hilton Street / Port Street area of Manchester

Thomas Edward and Annie had three children, Annie (born in Manchester in 1882), Edward (1883), and Thomas Edward (1885). Sadly Edward died in 1884, Thomas Edward in 1886, and their mother in 1887. Annie Read was about 25 years old when she died.

The following year, Thomas Edward married Cecelia Isabella Hughes. She was the daughter of Lawrence and Isabella Hughes, and was born in Liverpool in 1866. Thomas Edward and Cecelia Isabella had three children, all born in Manchester: Harold (1889), Thomas (1890), and Isobel (1892).

By the time of the 1890 court case in Leigh, Thomas Edward and family had moved to 18 St. John Street, Longsight, Manchester. Throughout the 1890s, his occupation was described as Salt Merchant. However, following the death of Edward Read in 1890, Edward Read & Son would have been his business, and the range of activities would have carried one before. This 1893 advertisement confirms that an involvement in stone quarrying and farming in Westleigh continued.

WANTED, Three strong Carters, used to farm work.—Apply Edward Read & Son, Stone Quarries, West Leigh, Lancashire.

Manchester Evening News, 14th January 1893

The following advertisement suggests that the business did transport materials and perhaps finished products by canal, and that the proximity of the premises to the Rochdale Canal Basin may have been an important reason for the Read family relocating to the Hilton Street area.

WANTED, a CAPTAIN for a Canal Flat. Apply Edward Read and Son, Brewer-street, Port-street, Manchester.

Manchester Evening News, 27th July 1895

This advertisement seems to imply a change in premises, but within the same area. Earlier advertisements mentioned premises at the junction of Hilton Street with Stanley Street (later renamed tariff Street). The implication of this 1895 advertisement is that the business had relocated to the junction of Brewer Street and Port Street.



Map 9 – Port Street / Brewer Street area of Manchester

A trade directory of 1895 lists Edward Read & Son as being “Salt, plaster, Bolton polish, chalk, whiting, cement, modellers’ clay, ultra-marine blue, and hearth stone merchants and quarry owners” with premises at Brewer Street, Port Street, and quarries at West Leigh. They are also listed as Quarry Owners and Stone Merchants at West Leigh Lane, West Leigh. The term “hearth stone” is used to describe the stone used to construct fireplaces, and the stones used to clean them. In this case, I assume that the term has been used to describe the cleaning stones.

Most subsequent advertisements just refer to Brewer Street as being the address of Edward Read & Son, this advertisement for recovery of a lost handcart being an early example.

REWARD 5s.–LOST, a Handcart, painted yellow, No. 11 : address on, Edward Read and Son, Brewer-st., Manchester : anyone detaining same after this notice will be prosecuted.

Manchester Evening News, 15th January 1897

Folk history associates the use of donkey stones with Northern housewives in the grimy mill towns of Lancashire and Yorkshire in particular. The following advertisement shows that donkey stones were offered for sale in other counties, and also confirms that “Donkey Brand” was being promoted during the 1890s. Unfortunately the maker is not mentioned, but it is unlikely to have been anyone other than Edward Read & Son.

HAVE You Yet Used The Donkey Brand Step Stone if not do so at once, as it makes the steps beautiful and white.—Wholesale from J. and S. Bailey, Newcastle, Staffs. Sold everywhere.

Staffordshire Sentinel, 7th September 1897

The following year, advertisements placed in newspapers circulating in other counties did confirm E. Read & Son of Manchester to be the sole manufacturers of Donkey Brand scouring and cleaning blocks.

READ'S DONKEY BRAND

for

Scouring and Cleaning. Blocks, 1 ½ lb. weight.
Sold by Leading Grocers, Oilmen, etc. 1d. Each.
Sole Manufacturers - E. READ & SON, Manchester.

Lakes Chronicle and Reporter, 27th April 1898

This example from Worcestershire is even further from the area considered to be the main market for donkey stones.

READ'S DONKEY BRAND

FOR

SCOURING AND CLEANING.
BLOCKS, 1 ½ lb. WEIGHT.
Sold by Leading Grocers, Oilmen, etc. 1d. Each.

Sole Manufacturers—E. READ & SON, Manchester.

Bromsgrove & Droitwich Messenger, 7th May 1898

These advertisement finally confirm the existence of Donkey Brand scouring and cleaning blocks by the end of the 1890s. Having advertised to establish brand identity and to boost popularity of the product, Edward Read & Son had to take action to defend the brand. Other manufacturers started producing competing products, and in some cases imprinted a donkey on their scouring stones to fool potential customers into thinking they were buying stones by Edward Read & Son. The business' solicitors placed the following advertisement in 1899.

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

TO WHOLESALE AND RETAIL PURCHASERS OF THE WELL KNOWN "DONKEY BRAND" RUBBING STONE.

Whereas, it has come to the knowledge of our clients, Messrs. EDWARD READ & SON, of Brewer-street, Manchester, the Registered Proprietors of "Donkey Brand" Rubbing Stone, that certain dealers in rubbing stone of another brand are knowingly selling such stone as "Donkey Brand," this is to give notice that, from and after this date, LEGAL PROCEEDINGS will be taken against any person or persons. firm or firms dealing in rubbing stone, and attempting to pass same as and for "Donkey Brand."—Dated this first day of February, 1899.

CHARLES HEYWOOD, SON. & HUDSON,
3, Mount-street, Albert Square Manchester.
Solicitors to the said Edward Read & Son.

Manchester Evening News, 2nd February 1899

By the mid-1890s, Thomas Edward Read had moved to Vernon Terrace, Birch Lane, Longsight, and then to 480 Stockport Road, Longsight. He died in Blackpool, aged about 41 years.

Following the death of Thomas Edward, Cecilia Isabella Read took over the running of the business, perhaps with the assistance of other members of the Read family. In the 1901 census she was living at 480 Stockport Road with her children Harold, Thomas, and Isobel, step daughter Annie, Sarah Penkett, niece of Thomas Edward, and her parents Laurence and Isabella Hughes.

Directory entries of the early 1900s confirmed that the Read business continued at Brewer Street, Port Street, with a large range of products and activities - "Salt, plaster, chalk, whiting, cement, ultramarine blue and hearth stone (Donkey Brand) merchants and quarry owners". One directory states Edward Read & Son to have been established in 1834. In 1905, for the first time, William Morritt is named as manager of the Reads' quarry in West Leigh Lane.

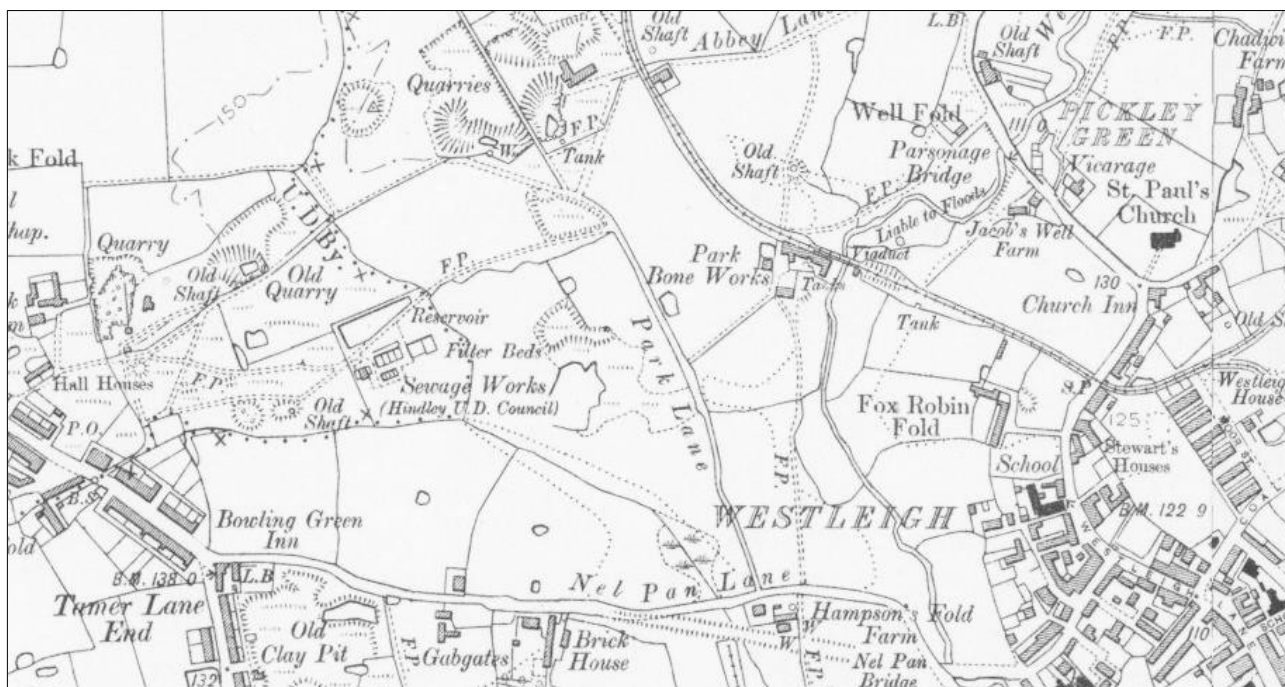
In 1908 Cecelia Isabella married Lucian Ben Brettelle (or Brettel). He was born in Manchester around 1871, and was the son of Edward Brettelle and Ellen Thompson. By 1911 they had moved to Burnage Lane, Withington, Manchester, where Lucian was a Press Agent. Step sons Harold and Thomas were now in their twenties, and were described in the 1911 census as being a Salt Merchant's employees, Harold a Clerk and Thomas a Traveller. It seems likely that they were working for Edward Read & Son, but it is not clear who was now running the business. Uncle Albert Edward Read appears to have worked for the family business, being described as a Salt Merchant in the 1901 census, but he died in 1910.

The Read family tree got more confusing in 1910, when Annie Read, Thomas Edward's daughter (and Cecelia Isabella's step-daughter), married Herbert Henry Bretelle (or Brettell), who was also a son of Edward Brettelle and Ellen Thompson. They lived in Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, where Herbert Henry was a Commercial Traveller.

Access to the 1921 census might help to resolve some issues relating to the management of Edward Read & Son following the death of Thomas Edward Read, but it is not available online until 2022. I may revisit this research when it is available, but for the time being I will take for granted the continuation of the business even though I do not know who was in charge.

William Morritt (1857 – 1901) and William Albert Morritt (1876 – 1942)

William Morritt was named as manager of the Reads' quarries in Westleigh in directory entries of the early 1900s. However, William Morritt (senior) had died by that time, and his son William Albert had taken over as stone quarry manager.



Map 10 – Westleigh, Lancashire, showing Park Lane leading to quarries

William Morritt was born in Manchester, Lancashire in 1857. He was the son of William Morritt, a joiner, and Jane Winstanley. In 1876 he married Jessie Mathews Thompson in Collyhurst, Manchester. Jessie was born in Todmorden, Yorkshire, in 1857 and was the daughter of William and Mary Thompson.

Throughout the 1870s into the late 1880s, Morritt was described as being a joiner, and the family lived at various addresses in Manchester. It is not clear how he came to be associated with the Reads, but it is possible that he worked for them in the construction of carts for cotton mills. By the time of the 1891 census he had changed career and residence, and was a Stone Quarry Manager, living at "Farm", Nel Pan Lane, Westleigh. It seems likely that he replaced James Appleton in 1890 as soon as the former quarry manager was evicted, and that the farm was Hampson's Fold Farm.

William and Jessie Morritt had seven children, all born in Manchester: William Albert (born 1876), John Thomas (1878), Ernest (1880), David Winstanley (1882), Arthur (1884), Jessie (1887), and Charles Edward (1890).

Jessie Morritt died in Westleigh in 1891.

The following year, William married Emily Beswick. Emily was born in Manchester in 1869, and was the daughter of Henry Beswick and Caroline Jones. William and Emily's first child, daughter Emily, was born in 1893, but died later that year. A second daughter, Ethel, was born in 1895.

William Morritt died in 1900 at Hampson's Fold Farm. In 1901, Emily Morritt was still living at the farm, and step-son John Thomas was employed as an Engineer at Stone Quarry. Eldest step-son William Albert had left home and married.

Emily Morritt married Alfred Massey in 1906, and by 1911 were living in Gorton, Manchester, with Emily's daughter Ethel.

William Albert Morritt married Alice Hart in 1898. The electoral register of 1900 shows him living at 663 Atherton Road, Hindley Green, and the census of the following year records his occupation as Stone Quarry Manager while living at the same address. Atherton Road is to the north of the quarries marked on the map of Westleigh, so it seems likely that William Albert took over the management of the Reads' quarries on the death of his father.



Hardwaremen are earnestly requested to write to us for prices before placing orders. We are not factors or agents. We are the actual quarry owners and are in a position to compete with anyone. We carry large stocks of PIPE CLAY, BATH BRICK, HOUSEHOLD SAND, SILVER SAND, &c. We are proprietors of the famous SUNFLOWER POLISHING SOAP and ACME KNIFE POLISH. Large stocks held of PLASTER, WHITING, CEMENT, ULTRAMARINE, and LIME BLUE. Delivered in truck loads to any station in the United Kingdom.

BATH BRICK . .

HEARTH STONE

We sell other cheap lines suitable for Hardwaremen. Write for list of prices.

EDWARD READ & SONS, Manufacturers and Merchants,
BREWER STREET, PORT STREET, MANCHESTER.

Tel. Address: "Plaster, Manchester,"
National Telephone 1998.

DONKEY BRAND.

Quarries, Leigh, Lancashire.



"Sunflower Polishing Soap" and "Acme Knife Polish" seem to be long-forgotten products, and are outside the scope of this history.


Hearthstones and Bath Brick were the headline products in this 1908 advertisement, and other cleaning products were offered. "Bolton Polish" is no doubt another long-forgotten product.

National Telephone, 1908.
Telegraphic Address:
"PLASTER, MANCHESTER."
ESTABLISHED 1834.

Edward Read and Son
Brewer Street, Port Street, MANCHESTER.

"DONKEY BRAND" HEARTHSTONE. HEARTHSTONE
BATH BRICK. BATH BRICK, Powdered, in Cartons. (Natural).
BATH BRICK, Powdered, in Drums.
PIPE CLAY (Original "Army and Navy").
BOLTON POLISH. ENGINE POLISH. KNIFE POLISH.
POLISHING SOAP (Sunflower). POTTERY MOULDS.
MOP STONES. SILVER SAND. SAMPLES & PRICES on application.

DONKEY BRAND.



Advertisements placed by third parties also promoted the use of Read's Donkey Brand. This first example is from Bolton, Lancashire.

HADWIN STREET SAND MILLS.

CLOSE TO KAY-STREET TRAM STAGE, BOLTON.

GROUND SAND for Moulding and Household Purposes. SALT. All kinds of CLEANING STONES. Sole Agent for READ'S Donkey brands for Floors, &c. Shops supplied.

A post-card with requirements will ensure expeditious delivery to all parts of town and district.

Bolton Evening News, 22nd January 1901

Perhaps more surprising, bearing in mind the usual association of donkey stones with the North of England, is this advertisement placed in a London newspaper:

LADIES.

For Scouring and Cleaning doorsteps, windowsills, flags, &c., nothing equals

READ'S

**DONKEY
BRAND.**

Each genuine Tablet bears the impression of a DONKEY.

REFUSE IMITATIONS.

Sold by grocers, stores, drysalters, oilmen, &c.

Wholesale only from

E. READ & SON, Brewer St., Manchester.

Clarion (London), 17th January 1902

In addition to selling Read's Celebrated Donkey Brands, W. H. Green of Bolton also advertised "Bathbricks", another type of cleaning stone. It is possible that these were also Bath Bricks made by Edward Read & Son.

CLEANING STONE & SALT MERCHANT.

W. H. GREEN, Hadwin-st. Sand Mills, Higher Bridge-st. All kinds of Cleaning Stones, Salt, Bathbricks, Pipeclays, &c. Sole Agent for READ'S CELEBRATED DONKEY BRANDS.

Bolton Evening News, 2nd September 1902

As mentioned previously, the Read business became quite protective of its Donkey Brand. Legal action had been threatened in 1899, and in 1909 there was a court action against a William Melling, said to have been selling counterfeit Donkey brand rubbing stones.

The following reports both refer to Edwin Read and Son, of Brewer Street, Manchester. I assume this is simply an error. I have not found anyone by that name in the Read family at this time.

RUBBING STONES.

Manchester Application for Injunction.

There was amusement in the Chancery Court, sitting in the Manchester Assize Courts, this morning, in connection with an action brought by Edwin [sic] Read and Son, of Brewer-street, Manchester, against William Melling, of Preston, to restrain the defendant from infringing a trade mark. Mr. Radford explained that the articles were known as "rubbing stones," on which the image of a donkey and the words "Donkey brand " were imprinted. This had been registered as a trade mark.

The defendant, who appeared in person, said he did not know he had done wrong. There was nothing to show that it was a trade mark, only the donkey. He was prepared to consent to the injunction asked for, and to break up the rubbing stones in his possession bearing the mark, and on these terms the plaintiffs waived their right to costs and damages.

Manchester Evening News, 8th November 1909

The second report places William Melling in Kirkham Street, Preston. This is a short street off Fylde Road, which nowadays is in that part of Preston mainly occupied by the buildings of the University of Central Lancashire. Unfortunately a Preston street directory of 1905 records only a cotton mill and a mineral water maker in Kirkham Street. The only William Melling listed as a trader in Preston was a fish curer at 92 and 93 High Street. Could he have made counterfeit donkey stones as a sideline at a workshop in Kirkham Street? This seems unlikely, but who knows? I admit defeat in my search for the correct William Melling, as there are no obvious candidates in the censuses, but I would be pleased to hear from anyone who thinks they have spotted the relevant person.

“DONKEY BRAND” PRESTON MAN WHO INFRINGED A TRADE MARK

William Melling, of Kirkham-street, Preston, appeared in person at the Chancery Court in Manchester, to-day, as defendant in an action brought by Edwin [sic] Read and Son, of Manchester, to restrain him from infringing a trade mark.

This mark, it was explained by Mr. Radford, counsel for the plaintiff, consisted of the figure of a donkey and the words “Donkey Brand” imprinted on what were called rubbing stones. Specimens were produced.

Defendant said he did not know he had wrong. There was nothing to indicate that it was a trade mark, only the figure of a donkey. He was willing to submit to an injunction. The offending stones now in his possession had been defaced or broken up.

An injunction was granted, the plaintiffs waiving their claim to damages and costs.

Lancashire Evening Post, 8th November 1909

At least this report got the Reads’ business name right.

Infringing a Trade Mark. AN AMUSING ACTION.

There was amusement in the Chancery Court, sitting in the Manchester Assize Courts, in connection with an action brought by Edward Read and Son, Brewer-street, Manchester, against Wm. Melling, of Preston, to restrain the defendant from infringing a trade mark. Mr. Radford explained that the articles were known as "rubbing stones," on which the image of a donkey and the words "donkey brand " were imprinted. This had been registered as a trade mark.

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Cotton Factory Times, 12th November 1909

Despite winning the case in 1909, it seems that the reads found it necessary to threaten action from time to time, as this 1926 advertisement placed in a Staffordshire newspaper shows. By this date,

the business had become Edward Read & Son, Ltd. When Thomas Read married Blanche Evelyn Cohnstern in Manchester in 1919, his occupation was given as Merchant. In later years he was described as Director, and I assume that he was a director of the limited company. He was also called a director in a probate record of 1933. In the 1930s, the Reads moved to Wilmslow, Cheshire, and Thomas' occupation was Salt & Stone Merchant. It would have been possible to run a Manchester company from Wilmslow.

WARNING re DONKEY BRAND

TRADE MARK DONKEY BRAND REGISTERED

Many users of Donkey Brand having complained that Stones not bearing our Trade Mark (as appended) have been supplied to them, we have been compelled to take action in protection of our interests.

We beg respectfully to point out that persons selling Donkey Brand ***any stones not of our manufacture are liable to be proceeded against.***

Signed, EDWARD READ & SON Ltd., Port St., Manchester.

Staffordshire Sentinel, 20th January 1926

Breakthroughs in research sometimes come from surprising sources. At the time of writing this brief history, a document in the name of Edward Read & Son, Ltd. was available for sale on the well-known auction site ebay. As I said from the start, I have no particular interest in donkey stones, so I have resisted the temptation to buy the document. However, I hope that the vendor does not mind me drawing it to your attention, in case someone would like to buy it.

The screenshot shows an eBay listing for a historical document. The document is titled "Brewer Street, Manchester Original 1934 Billhead Edward Read & Son Ltd." and is in "Used" condition. The price is £10.00. The document features the "Donkey Brand" logo, which includes a donkey and the text "Edward Read & Son Ltd. Brewer Street, Manchester". The document also contains a letterhead with the text "Sirs, One of our motor lorries will be calling at your works early on Wednesday morning, for 2 tons Powdered, and 2 tons Sharp Fluting, which we trust you will kindly have ready. Yours faithfully, EDWARD READ & SON LTD." The document is signed "The Millstone Trading Co." and "Sole Proprietors & Manufacturers of 'Donkey Brand'". The eBay listing includes a "Free postage" badge, a "Click & Collect" option, a "30-day returns" policy, and a "Posts from United Kingdom" label. The listing also includes a "Nectar" badge and a "Collection" section.

ebay Shop by category Search for anything All Categories

Back to home page | Listed in category: Collectables > Paper & Ephemera > Local Interest/ Topographical

Brewer Street, Manchester Original 1934 Billhead Edward Read & Son Ltd.

Condition: Used

Price: £10.00

Buy it now

Add to basket

Best Offer:

Make offer

Watch this item

Click & Collect 30-day returns Posts from United Kingdom

Collect 10 Nectar points Redeem your points | Conditions

Collection: Click & Collect - Select store at checkout.

Postage: Free Standard Delivery | See details

Item location: Newport Pagnell, United Kingdom

There are several point of interest in this document. Firstly, it gives an artist's impression of the Brewer Street premises. These look impressive, and seem larger than the workshops occupied by some competing manufacturers in Lancashire.

Secondly, the letter-heading names the directors to be: HAROLD READ, THOMAS READ, ANNIE BRETTELLE, and ISOBEL GOODALL. The stationery was printed for use in the 1920s, so it is possible that there had been changes by 1934. We have already discussed Thomas Read. As the letter appears to have been signed by H. Read, we will look at Harold Read first.

Harold Read was the older brother of Thomas. He was born in Manchester in 1889. In 1911, he was living in Withington, Manchester, with his step-mother, Cecelia Isabella Brettelle, and was employed as a Clerk for a Salt Merchant, no doubt Edward Read & Son. In 1913 Harold married Ethel Lomas. Son Lucien (or Lucian) was born in 1916, and daughter Sidonie in 1917. By 1939 Harold had moved to Marple, Cheshire, and his occupation was Hearthstone Manufacturer. Sidonie was a Bank Clerk. In 1939 Lucien was living in Croydon, Surrey, where he was a Medical Student. Lucien married Bridget Mary Holland, a Charge Nurse, in 1941, and in later years they settled in Blackburn, Lancashire. She died there in 1999. Lucien died in 2005. Sidonie married Charles B. Marshall in 1943, and second husband Frank Chadfield in 1951. She died in 2004.

Annie Brettelle was Thomas Edward Read's daughter, half-sister to Harold and Thomas. Born in Manchester in 1882, she had died in 1932, meaning that the stationery being used by the company was out-of-date. In 1933 probate was granted to Harold Read (secretary – presumably Company Secretary of Edward Read & Son, Ltd.), Thomas Read (director), and Lucian Ben Brettell (retired advertising agent). Husband Herbert had died in 1928.

Isobel Goodall was Thomas Edward Read's daughter Isobel. Born in Manchester in 1892, she was sister to Harold and Thomas, and half-sister to Annie. She married a Richard H. Hurst in 1914. Hurst must have died during or shortly after the First World War, because Isobel married Arthur S Goodall in Stockport, Cheshire, in 1921. He was born in Stockport in 1894, and was the son of James William and Leila Goodall. He served in the Royal Field Artillery during the Great War. Son Brian Swain Goodall was born in Stockport in 1922, and William Read Goodall was born there in 1925. By 1939 the Goodalls had moved to Prestatyn, Flintshire, Wales, where Arthur was a Builder's Clerk. Isobel's role was "Unpaid Domestic Duties". Isobel died in Wales in 1977 at the age of 84. Her husband died in 1982, and son William in 2005.

In 1939, Isobel Read's mother, Cecelia Isabella Read/Brettele was recorded as staying with the Goodalls in Prestatyn. She was a widow of private means. However her entry is crossed out with a note – "See Page 23". It is possible that she had been recorded at another address and needed to be excluded to avoid double-counting. The death of a "Cecilia I Brettele", age 89, was registered in Bucklow, Cheshire, in 1956.

The stationery used in 1934 mentions several of the company's products, but the emphasis is on being "Sole Proprietors and Manufacturers of "DONKEY BRAND" SCOURING STONE".

In later years, advertisements placed by Edward Read & Son Ltd. tended to proclaim the heritage of the product, and continued to state that donkey stones had been in use since 1834. They also advised customers to avoid imitations, but did not threaten legal action against other manufacturers. The rubbing or scouring stones sold by rival businesses were marketed with brand names such as "Lion" or "Pony", so should not have been confused with the "Donkey Brand" product. By the mid-

twentieth century there was even an association of scouring stone manufacturers, though I have not traced any records which might have confirmed membership.

The following advertisements are from the 1940s.

A Generation Ago Grandma used "DONKEY BRAND" Scouring Stone. Her work was lighter—her stones brighter. See the words— "Donkey Brand" on every stone. Sole Manufacturers, Ed. Read and Son Ltd., Brewer St., Manchester. 1.

Lancaster Guardian, 11th October 1946

INSIST upon "Donkey Brand" Scouring Stone. Used for over 100 years. See the words "DONKEY BRAND" on every stone. Refuse imitations. Sole manufacturers. Ed. Read and Son Ltd., Brewer Street, Manchester, 1.

Lancaster Guardian, 18th October 1946

THE VICTORIAN AGE WAS A "DONKEY BRAND" AGE Insist on "DONKEY BRAND" SCOURING STONE. See the words "DONKEY BRAND" on every stone. Refuse Imitations Sole Mfrs: Ed. Read and Son, Ltd. Brewer-street, Manchester. 1. (5)

Lancashire Evening Post, 16th November 1946

SINCE 1834 "DONKEY BRAND" SCOURING STONE has made work lighter - stones brighter Beware of imitations; see the words "DONKEY BRAND" on every stone. Sole Mfrs.: Ed Read and Son, Ltd, Brewer-street, Manchester, 1 (6)

Lancashire Evening Post, 23rd November 1946

Insist upon the Genuine Article

See the words "DONKEY BRAND" on every scouring stone you buy. For Hearthstones, stone steps, window sills, or any stone surface.

"DONKEY BRAND"

Sole Manufacturers: **Edward Read & Son Ltd., Brewer Street, Manchester, 1.**

Tel. Central 1898. Telegrams: "Plaster" M/cr.

Nelson Leader, 14th January 1949

THERE ARE SO MANY IMITATIONS

but only ONE

"DONKEY BRAND"

FAMOUS SINCE 1834

FOR ALL STONE SURFACES.

Sole Manufacturers: **Edward Read & Son Ltd., Brewer St., Manchester**

Telephone: Central 1898.

Nelson Leader, 6th May 1949

At present I have not found any newspaper advertisements later than 1949, but additional titles continue to be added to online archives so more might be found in future.

Tip of the Day

From a New Zealand Newspaper:

Scullery Odds and Ends.—Most good housekeepers have on hand a soap jar in which to stow away the bits of soap. that soon become too small for handling and are likely to get lost. But the fragments of the scouring stones and bricks are an ever-vexing domestic-problem. A good and economical way of disposing of them is to place them. between two strong pieces of brown: paper and crush them with a rolling-pin till perfectly pulverised. The powder can then be put into a tin can or box and used with a damp cloth for scouring tins, agateware, brasses, etc. Odds and ends of a dozen kinds may be mixed together with impunity.

Woodville Examiner (New Zealand), 2nd March 1906

This implies that several makes of scouring stones and bricks were available in New Zealand in the early twentieth century. If so, I assume they were made locally rather than being imported from Lancashire. However, the same tip appeared a year earlier in Welsh newspaper *The Rhondda Leader*, on 18th March 1905 (repeated in the 25th March 1905 edition). Newspapers tended to use “filler” articles, repeating stories from other titles which were not necessarily of relevance to their local readership.

Summary

It is by no means clear why Read’s “Donkey Brand” rubbing stones were said to be famous since 1834. At that time, Thomas Read, a Wheelwright, was a relatively new resident of Manchester. He may still have been mourning the death of his first daughter, Margaret. Edward Read, whose name is most associated with “Donkey Brand” was born in 1835, but died in 1892. As this seems to be before marketing of the brand name started, it seems possible that Thomas Edward Read chose the date 1834 in the 1890s.

Thomas Read imported patent scouring bricks before the family business started manufacturing them. These seem to have been taken to Westleigh via Warrington. The source is not known at present, in which case it is impossible to rule them having been Flanders Bricks or Tiles. However, if the Reads’ imported product dated back only to 1834, then Flanders Bricks are of much older origin.

In Lancashire in particular, but also in other counties, rag and bone men were known to travel the streets of industrial towns, offering rubbing stones in exchange for a multitude of unwanted household items. As their carts tended to be drawn by donkeys, it is possible that this prompted the Reads to give their own cleaning stones the “Donkey Brand” name. Subsequently all makes of rubbing stone tended to be called donkey stones, even if carrying the logo of another manufacturer.

Edward Read and Son, Limited, marketed donkey stones until the late 1940s, if not later. Using online resources, I have found advertisements placed up to 1949. Later advertisements could come to light when more newspapers become available online.

It is not clear when the company ceased trading. At present, I do not know when Harold and Thomas Read died, or who would have inherited their interests in the company.

When Harold's wife Ethel died in 1955, probate was granted to son Lucien, by then a Medical Practitioner, and therefore unlikely to make a career change to donkey stone production.

I have identified one child of Thomas Read – Joyce, born in 1920. When Thomas' wife died in 1967, probate was granted to Joyce Beckett, single woman. This implies that Thomas had died before his wife. A Joyce Read married Roy Beckett in 1954. A copy marriage certificate would confirm whether this was Thomas' daughter.

When well-known businesses cease trading, local newspapers often carry reports. Unfortunately I have not found any covering the demise of the Reads' donkey stone business.

The following chapter examines rivals of the Reads, who were involved in production and distribution of rubbing or scouring stones earlier than the Reads first advertised them.

Bibbington and Wild

The Reads of Manchester no doubt had several local rivals who either made or distributed rubbing stones. Most are unknown, but in my view it is worth looking in detail at the Bibbington and Wild families.

There is very little online about the Bibbingtons, and what there is mainly discusses their involvement in the lime quarries of Dove Holes, near Buxton in Derbyshire. One website claims the Dove Holes quarries were started by Samuel Bibbington in the early 1800s, whereas another suggests a date of 1847 and an unnamed “member of the Bibbington family”.

That member of the Bibbington family was probably John Bibbington, who also had a business arrangement whereby John Wild of Leigh, Lancashire, sold his products, including scouring stones. We shall look at both men and their families. As there is little detail online about the Bibbingtons, I shall include a little more information than is necessary for a study of donkey stones, but which may be of use to those with an interest in quarrying in Derbyshire.

John Bibbington of Rochdale and Dove Holes

I assume that the Samuel Bibbington said to have started the Dove Holes quarries in the early 1800s is the father of John Bibbington. He was born in Cheshire in the late 1780s. It is not clear where he was living or what he was doing in the very early 1800s, but in 1812 he married Sarah Ogden in Rochdale, Lancashire. When sons John and Samuel were born in 1821 and 1826, he was a farmer at Kirk Holt, Rochdale, with no obvious connection to quarrying in Derbyshire. An electoral register of 1836 shows Bibbington at Kirkholt, Castleton. By 1841 he had moved to Hill Top, Castleton, and was still a farmer. He continued farming in Castleton until his death in 1863.

Son John Bibbington, born Rochdale 1821, was a Lime Dealer in Drake Street, Castleton, Lancashire, by the time of the 1841 census.



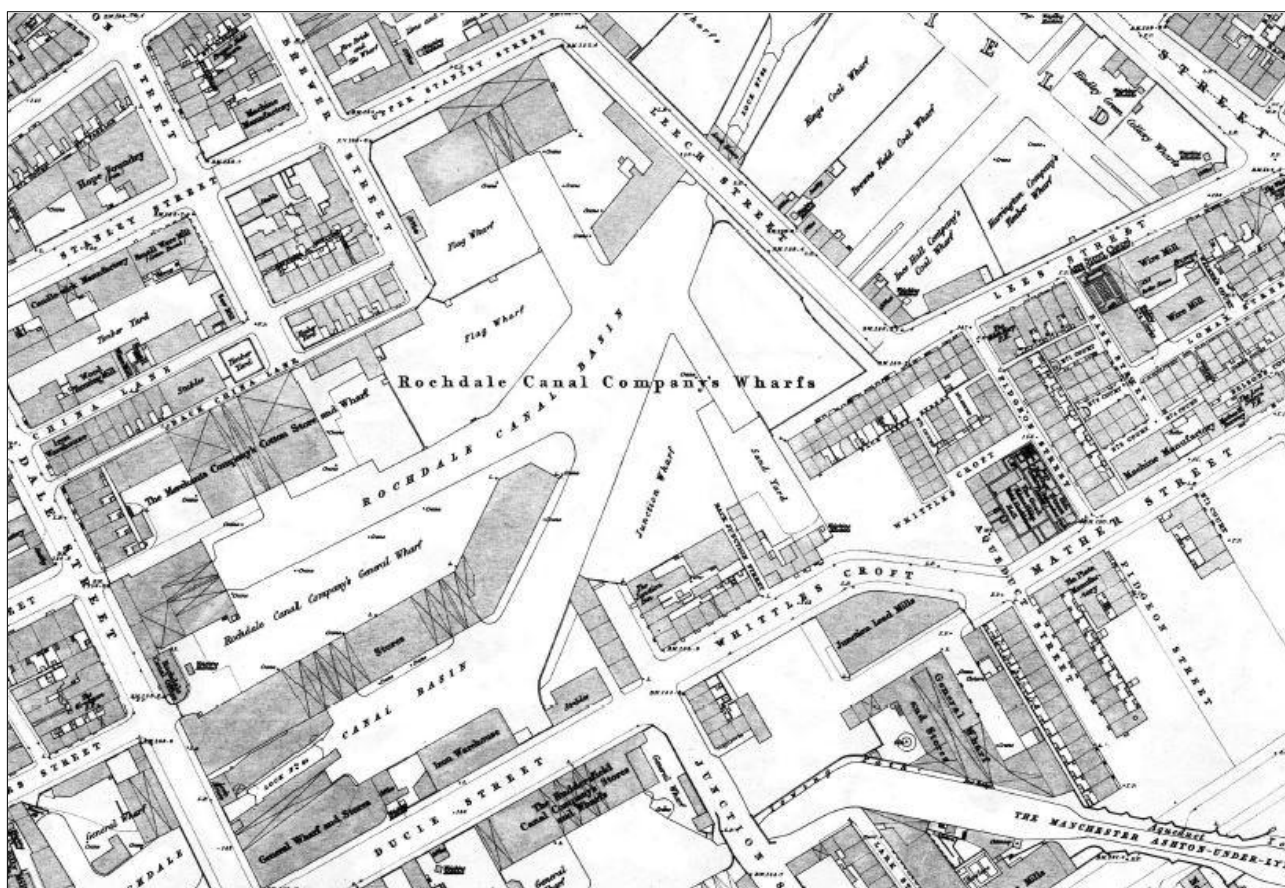
Map 12 – Drake Street, Rochdale, 1840s – note proximity to Canal Wharf of the Rochdale Canal

John was barely twenty years old when he was a Lime Dealer. How he chose this occupation when his background had been farming is not clear. It is possible that he had a family connection to someone in the trade. One possibility is that he had a relationship to Simon Oakden, who was a Lime Dealer in Church Lane, Rochdale, from the early 1820s onwards.

In 1841, John Bibbington married Mary Ann Barrett at Todmorden. Their first child was born in 1842, and he was named Simon Oakden Bibbington. Second son William was born in 1843, and died later the same year. Baptismal records for both sons show John's occupation to be Lime Dealer.

John Leach, in his *The North West Derbyshire Limestone Industry*, published in *Derbyshire Miscellany* in 2013, identified John Bibbington from Rochdale as a new Lime Burner in Dove Holes in the 1840s.

By 1846, John Bibbington & Co. was listed in a Lancashire directory, with premises at Whittles Croft, between Ducie Street and Mather Street, Manchester.



Map 13 – Whittles Croft, Manchester – note proximity to Rochdale Canal Company's Wharfs

The premises would have been served by the wharves of the Rochdale Canal Company, thereby allowing Bibbington to conduct business in both Rochdale and Manchester. His business was described as Lime Dealer, Coal Merchant, and Moulders' Sand Dealer, and he employed a William Popple as agent.

Bibbington's home address in the 1851 census was still Drake Street, Castleton, Rochdale, and his occupation was Lime Merchant. In the following year, he dissolved a partnership with Jonathan

Warr. It appears that they had traded as Lime and Slate Merchants, and the business arrangement must have given Bibbington an opening in Bolton, Lancashire, as shown by the following legal notices. Warr had decided to concentrate on the slate side of the business, but Bibbington continued supplying lime in Bolton.

JONATHAN WARR

BEGS to announce to his Customers and the public that he has DISPOSED of his TRADE as LIME MERCHANT at Bolton to Mr. JOHN BIBBINGTON, of Rochdale, and of Dove Holes near Buxton, on whose behalf he respectfully solicits a continuance of those favours which have been extended to himself in the Lime Trade.

JONATHAN WARR beg to return thanks for the liberal support he has hitherto received, and hopes by giving his undivided attention to the SLATE TRADE ALONE, to merit a continuance of the patronage of his friends and the public.

Canal Wharf, 2nd November, 1852.

JOHN BIBBINGTON,

Of Rochdale, and of Dove Holes, near Buxton,

LIME BURNER,

HAVING succeeded Mr. JONATHAN WARR, in the Trade of Lime Merchant, at Bolton, begs to inform consumers that he purposes keeping a constant supply of the best BUXTON LIME at his Wharf, Canal Side, Bolton, and hopes for a continuance of the support which his predecessor has enjoyed.

Canal Wharf, Bolton, November 2nd, 1852.

Bolton Chronicle, 6th November 1852

Note that Bibbington is described as being of Rochdale and Dove Holes, near Buxton. It seems likely that John Bibbington is the member of the Bibbington family who established a lime quarry at Dove Holes during the 1840s.

Bibbington advertised availability of his Buxton Lime in several Lancashire towns during the 1850s.

BUXTON LIME.—In consequence of the Bury and Bolton Canal being stopped for want of water, I beg to apprise my friends and customers in those towns that they can get a SUPPLY of LIME at my Wharf, Mather-street, Ducie-street, Manchester, at 10s 10d per ton. Parties residing in Bury can be supplied from Heywood upon giving notice to my agent, Canal Wharf, Bury.

JOHN BIBBINGTON, Lime Burner.

Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, 5th August 1854

Bolton, Leigh, Bury, Heywood, and Rochdale were specified in this advertisement.

BUXTON LIME. -JOHN BIBBINGTON,

Lime Merchant, Junction Wharf, Mather-street, Ducie-street, Manchester, begs to inform the public that he is SELLING best Buxton Lime, fresh from his works daily, at 10s. 10d. per ton. The quality of this lime is so highly approved of for Chemical, Manufacturing, Bleaching, Building, and Agricultural purposes, that the consumption exceeds twenty thousand tons annually. This lime can also be obtained at the—

CANAL WHARF, BOLTON;
CANAL WHARF, LEIGH;
CANAL WHARF, BURY;
CANAL WHARF, HEYWOOD; and
CANAL WHARF, ROCHDALE.

Dealer in all descriptions of Sand for Ironfounders.

Manchester Times, 9th September 1854

Advertisements in the *Leigh Chronicle and Weekly District Advertiser* during 1858 confirm that John Bibbington by then had a business arrangement with John Wild, Lime Agent, of the Canal Wharf, Leigh, Lancashire. He advertised availability of Buxton Lime fresh from his kilns by railway in several Lancashire towns, but also at “any other Railway Station in the Kingdom”. Other products included “every description of YORKSHIRE and ROCHDALE FLAGS and STONE. Also Plaster of Paris, Roman and Portland Cement, Scouring Stones, and Walling Stone”. Bath Brick was also mentioned in other advertisements.

Directory entries of the 1850s identified Bibbington as a Coal Merchant at Bury canal wharf, a Sand Grinder and Dealer at Whittles Croft, Manchester, and a Lime and Sand Merchant at the same Manchester premises. In addition, a Derbyshire directory of 1857 lists John Bibbington as a Lime Merchant at Dove Holes, in Wormhill Township, of the High Peak Hundred of Derbyshire.

At the time of the 1861 census, Bibbington was away from Lancashire, boarding in Derbyshire, at Fairfield near Buxton, with an occupation of Lime Merchant. That same year, he again advertised the availability of rubbing stones.

RUBBING STONES.—The Softest and Best Made for price, delivered at any railway station.—Address JOHN BIBBINGTON, lime merchant, Manchester.

Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser, 1st June 1861

A Derbyshire directory of 1862 lists John Bibbington as being a Lime Burner at Bibbington, near Buxton. At first I considered the possibility that the family had originated in Derbyshire, and took its name from the place. However, it appears that he constructed rows of cottages for his quarry workers near to the Dove Holes quarries, and the hamlets were named Lower and Higher Bibbington after the quarry owner.

Bibbington’s father had died in 1863, and his son Simon Oakden Bibbington died in 1864. Whether this had an adverse impact on Bibbington’s own health is not clear, but he died in Derbyshire in 1865.

Following John Bibbington’s death, the trustees and executors of his estate placed the following advertisement.

BUXTON LIME BURNER, LIME and IRONFOUNDERS' SAND MERCHANT, &c.
THE BUSINESS of the late JOHN BIBBINGTON will be CARRIED ON as usual by the Trustees and Executors, under the name of JOHN BIBBINGTON.

Bolton Chronicle, 4th February 1865

A Derbyshire directory of 1870 lists Bibbington & Co. as Lime Merchants at Fairfield, a village close to Buxton. The same directory lists John Bibbington as a Lime Merchant at Dovehole Dale, in Wormhill Parish.

The business continued to be operated by the trustees into the 1870s. This is confirmed by this report of a sad accident at a quarry owned by Bibbington at Westleigh, Lancashire. The same report appeared in many British newspapers in 1872.

SHOCKING ACCIDENT AT A STONE DELF.—On Saturday a shocking accident occurred at a stone delf at Westleigh, about two miles from Leigh, by which one man lost his life, and two others have received injuries. The delf is worked by the trustees of the late John Bibbington, the stone from which is raised by means of a steam engine. and travelling crane. A stone, something like fifteen cwt., had been wound up, and, just as the crane was turning to place it on the surface, one of the front wheels of the iron carriage, upon which the engine, to which is attached the crane, stands, broke in two, and the carriage, engine, and crane toppled over at a spot where, fortunately, only two men were at work. The engineer had warned the men below to keep at a safe distance from under the stone whilst it was being wound up, but the men disregarded his instructions, and the result was that William O'Brien, a labourer, of Bedford Leigh, was struck by the engine, one of the cog wheels jamming his head against the quarry, and he died immediately. The other man, Patrick Murray, attempted to escape when he saw the danger, but the concussion burst the boiler, and before he could get clear away he was scalded about the legs and feet with the water from the boiler. The engineer, John Scott, tried to escape the danger by jumping off the engine, but was thrown head foremost down the quarry, a distance of about thirty feet. He was seriously injured, one or two of his ribs being broken.

Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer, 30th April 1872

By the mid 1870s, John Bibbington's former business was in the hands of his younger brother, Samuel.

Samuel Bibbington married Mary Mills in 1853. She was born in Middleton, Lancashire, in about 1831. Samuel and Mary had seven children: Sarah Jane, born in Middleton in 1853; Mary, Middleton, 1855; Elizabeth, Castleton, 1858; Ann Ellen, Castleton, 1860; Amelia, Rochdale, 1862; Samuel Edmund Castleton, 1865; and Kezia, Rochdale, 1867. Throughout this period, Samuel was a farmer, mainly living at Hill Top, Castleton.

A directory of 1876 places Samuel Bibbington at 3 Upper Stanley Street, Dale Street, Manchester, and he was a Lime Burner, Limestone and Ironfounders' Sand Merchant, and Mortar Grinder, and Dealer in Builders' materials with a house at Castleton. This is close to John Bibbington's former premises to the south of Rochdale Canal Basin, and also close to Edward Read's business in the same part of Manchester.

The 1881 census places Samuel Bibbington at The Limes, on Manchester Road in Castleton, and gives his occupation as Lime Merchant. By this time he appears to have given up the farm at Hill Top and turned his back on farming.

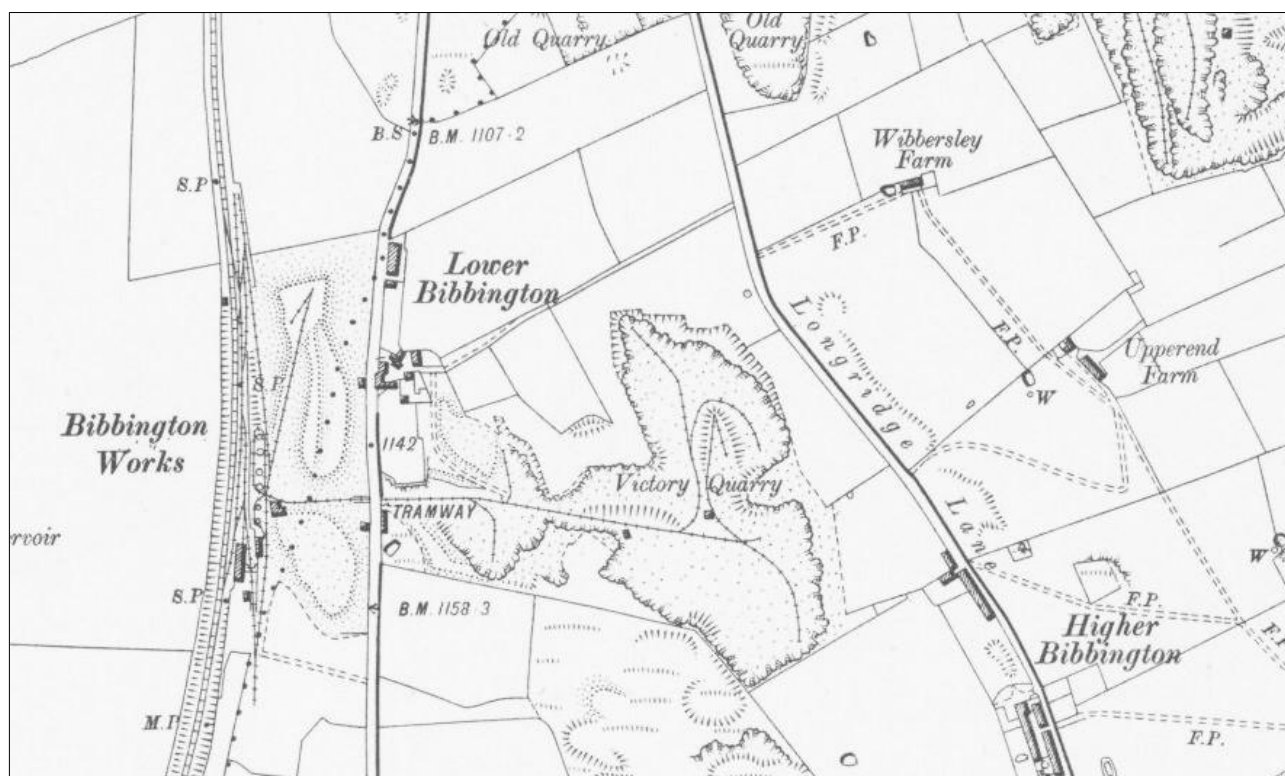
Directories of the 1880s show that he continued trading from premises in Upper Stanley Street, Manchester, and provided a variety of stone and sand products. Unfortunately directory entries of the 1870s and '80s do not confirm whether Samuel Bibbington continued to supply rubbing or

scouring stones. We shall see that the quarry at Westleigh was being operated by the Wilds by the 1870s. If Samuel Bibbington's business did not make rubbing stones, did it sell any from another source?

Samuel was involved in a little unpleasantness in Derbyshire in 1883.

ROW AT CHAPEL-EN-LE-FRITH FAIR.—At the Chapel-en-le-Frith Petty Sessions yesterday, Joseph Brassington, landlord of the Rose and Crown Inn, Chapel-en-le-Frith, was charged with assaulting Adam Fox, farmer, of Martinside, Chapel-en-le-Frith, on the 18th of October, at Chapel-en-le-Frith; and also with assaulting Samuel Bibbington, lime burner, of Bibbington Hall, near Dove Roles, on the same occasion. There was a cross summons against Fox for assaulting Brassington. After a hearing extending over three hours, the Bench fined Brassington £2 and costs for the assault upon Fox, and £1 and costs for that upon Bibbington, or in default one month in each case.

Sheffield Independent, 2nd November 1883



Map 14 – Lower and Higher Bibbington, near Dove Holes, Derbyshire

In 1884 there was a fatal accident at Bibbington's Perseverance Quarry at Dove Holes. The body of fifty-one year old Martin Mullins was discovered in the quarry by workmen. "The deceased, for many years, was an old and respected servant of the late Mr. John Bibbington, and at the time of his death he worked for and was much respected by his employer, Mr. Samuel Bibbington", reported the *Buxton Advertiser*. At the inquest, the jury recorded a verdict of "accidental death".

The death of Samuel Bibbington was reported in 1888.

Mr. Samuel Bibbington, the well-known lime-burner, died at the Limes, Castleton, near Rochdale, on Thursday. He was owner of the extensive quarries and lime works at Dove Holes, where there are now nearly 200 hands engaged.

Sheffield Daily Telegraph, 19th May 1888

DEATH OF SAMUEL BIBBINGTON

We deeply regret to have to record the death of Mr Samuel Bibbington, of Higher Bibbington, near Dove Holes, which took place at his residence, the Limes, Castleton, near Rochdale, early on Thursday morning. Deceased, who had been ailing for some time, was 62 years of age and leaves a family of six daughters and one son. He was a man highly respected for his probity and straightforward business characteristics, and was generally esteemed by his workpeople at Bibbington Lime Works, where he employed about 200 men. He was at Higher Bibbington on Saturday last, when it was apparent from his weak condition, that his vital powers were gradually declining. He was a Conservative of the old type, and from his plain and out spoken manner. secured even the respect of his opponents. His generosity to religious bodies was amply demonstrated when he gave £200 towards the erection of the Primitive Methodist chapel at Dove Holes, and a similar sum towards the building of St. Paul's Church. One of his last known charitable acts was a handsome donation to the organ fund of the church. It will be long ere Dove Holes looks upon his like again. His remains will be interred at Heywood Cemetery on Monday next.

Buxton Herald, 23rd May 1888

It is clear that Samuel Bibbington made a big impact in Dove Holes and the Buxton area in general. Some of John Bibbington's achievements seem to have become attributed to Samuel instead, such as the opening of the Victory Quarry. This is said to have been opened in 1863, which is during John's lifetime and while Samuel was still a farmer in Rochdale. There has possibly been further confusion of the achievements of Bibbington family members, with the opening of quarries being attributed to Samuel Bibbington, father of John and Samuel, in the early 1800s.

Another possible example of confusing Bibbington family members is this explanation of Bibbington's Tramway:

Bibbington's tramway carried lime ash from the Perseverance Works, active from 1840 to the late 1930s, up into Dove Holes Dale for dumping. The tramway was established by Samuel Bibbington in 1863 to link Perseverance Quarry to the new Buxton railway.

Derbyshire County Council website, as at 24th April 2021

When Samuel Bibbington died in 1888, his son Samuel Edmund was one of the executors of his estate. He was described as a Lime Burner, of The Limes, which was in Castleton, Lancashire.

Samuel Edmund Bibbington married Rosina Riley in Castleton, Lancashire, in 1889. Rosina was born in Castleton in 1866. Samuel and Rosina had two children, Samuel William, who was born in Wormhill, Derbyshire in 1890, and John Edmund, born in 1891, also in Wormhill. The village of Wormhill is east of Buxton, and just a few miles south east of Dove Holes. At this time, the parish may have included the hamlet of Bibbington. In the 1891 census, Samuel Edmund was a Lime Merchant at "The Hall", Wormhill, and in 1901 the family lived at Bibbington Hall, Higher Bibbington, Wormhill.

Derbyshire directories of 1895 and 1899 listed Samuel Bibbington, as a Lime Burner in Dove Holes. The trades section of the 1899 directory listed under Lime Burners Samuel Bibbington, of Dove Holes, Stockport **, and Samuel Bibbington (the exors. of), at Peak dale, Buxton.

** It seems that the postal address of Dove Holes was Stockport, Cheshire, though the village has always been in Derbyshire.

Inevitably having another Samuel in charge of the business has caused confusion. I have seen a suggestion that Bibbington Hall was rebuilt in a different location, by Samuel Bibbington, in 1906. If correct, it would have been built by Samuel Edmund, not his father. In 1911, Samuel Edmund was a Lime Merchant at The Hall, Dove Halls, and in 1918 his occupation was stated to be Lime Burner.

A Derbyshire directory of 1912 included Bibbington Ltd., Lime Merchants of Dove Holes, Buxton, and also Samuel Bibbington (the exors. of), Peak dale, Buxton.

Samuel Edmund Bibbington died in 1929. His executors included Samuel William and John Edmund, both said to be Lime Merchants.

In 1911, both Samuel William and John Edmund were assisting their father in his business of Lime Merchant.

Samuel William married Marie Crompton in 1918. I have identified three children – Betty (1919), John Derek (1922), and Marie Rosina (1924) – all births being registered in Chapel-en-le-Frith, Derbyshire. In 1939, he was a Lime Works Manager, with an address in Buxton (Winthorpe, Green lane). When his mother died in 1941, his occupation was stated to be Company Director. I assume he was a director of Samuel Bibbington Limited. Samuel William died in 1947, by which time he had moved to West Kirby, Cheshire. One of the executors was his son John Derek Bibbington, described as a Salesman. It is not clear whether this was a role in his father's business, or some unrelated trade.

John Edmund married Kathleen Winifred Metcalfe in 1932. In 1939, he was living at The Hall, Dove Holes, and was a Lime Burner. Like his brother, he was a Company Director at the time of his mother's death in 1941, presumably in Samuel Bibbington Limited. By the late 1950s, he had moved to Wilmslow, Cheshire, where he died in 1959. Probate was granted to his widow.

There are few mentions of Samuel Bibbington Limited. In 1932, a Derbyshire directory included under Lime Burners S. Bibbington Ltd., Dove Holes, Stockport (Cheshire). A telephone directory of 1939 identified the company as Buxton Lime Merchants, and gave addresses of New Sidings, Chichester Street, Rochdale; Dove Holes, Buxton; and 3 Upper Stanley Street, Manchester. The latter premises had been used by the business since the 1870s.

Rosina Bibbington was listed under Private Residents, as Mrs. Bibbington, in a Derbyshire directory of 1941, with an address of The Hall, Dove Holes, Stockport (Cheshire). Samuel William Bibbington, also under Private Residents, was at Winthorpe, Green Lane, Buxton. In the Lime Burners trade category, S. Bibbington Ltd. Were at Victory Lime Works, Dove Holes, Stockport (Cheshire).

In 1941, the year in which Rosina Bibbington died, the company was voluntarily wound-up.

SAMUEL BIBBINGTON Limited.

(Members' Voluntary Winding-up.)

AT an Extraordinary General Meeting of the above named Company duly convened and held at 60 and 62 Spring Gardens, Manchester 2 on the 26th day of December 1941, the subjoined Special Resolution was duly passed:—

“That the Company be wound up voluntarily and that Mr. C. W. Tweedale, Chartered Accountant of 60 and 62 Spring Gardens, Manchester 2 be and is hereby appointed Liquidator for the purposes of such winding-up.”

HELENA WALLIS, Chairman.

Samuel William and John Edmund had moved away from The Hall, to Buxton and Wilmslow respectively, by the 1940s. A few years later, it was reported that it had been converted to a cafe, catering to people passing through Dove Holes, presumably on the way to or from Buxton.

HALL IS NOW A CAFE

Opening next Monday as a cafe to cater for people travelling through Dove Holes, The Hall, formerly a private residence, will have a "Continental look" this summer with umbrella-shaded tables on the spacious lawn.

Built some 50 years ago by quarry owner Samuel Bibbington, The Hall was purchased by its new owners, Mrs. E. Beardsall and Mrs. Z. Newbound, both of Sale, last year.

They have sold their own homes and with their husbands have been living at The Hall since October while extensive decorations have been carried out.

The Hall will be open for seven days a week, serving morning coffee, afternoon teas, and suppers.

On Saturday night, a "housewarming" was held, and 75 people, mostly from Sale but including some Dove Holes residents, enjoyed an evening meal and dancing.

For both Mrs. Newbound and Mrs. Beardsall, catering is an entirely new venture—but both enjoy cooking and intend to specialise in home cooking and home made cakes.

Buxton Herald, 2nd March 1951

Summary

John Bibbington of Rochdale entered the lime trade as a young man at the beginning of the 1840s, possible having a connection to Simon Oakden, a Rochdale Lime Merchant. Some of Bibbington's activities in the Dove Holes area of Derbyshire have been attributed to either his father, Samuel Bibbington, or his younger brother, also Samuel. Both of these men were farmers in Rochdale at the time John was developing quarries in Dove Holes.

The main focus of the Bibbington family business was the sale of lime products. However, in the late 1850s and early 1860s, the availability of rubbing or scouring stones was advertised. The source of these was probably material extracted from a quarry in the Leigh area, which subsequently was operated by John Wild of Leigh.

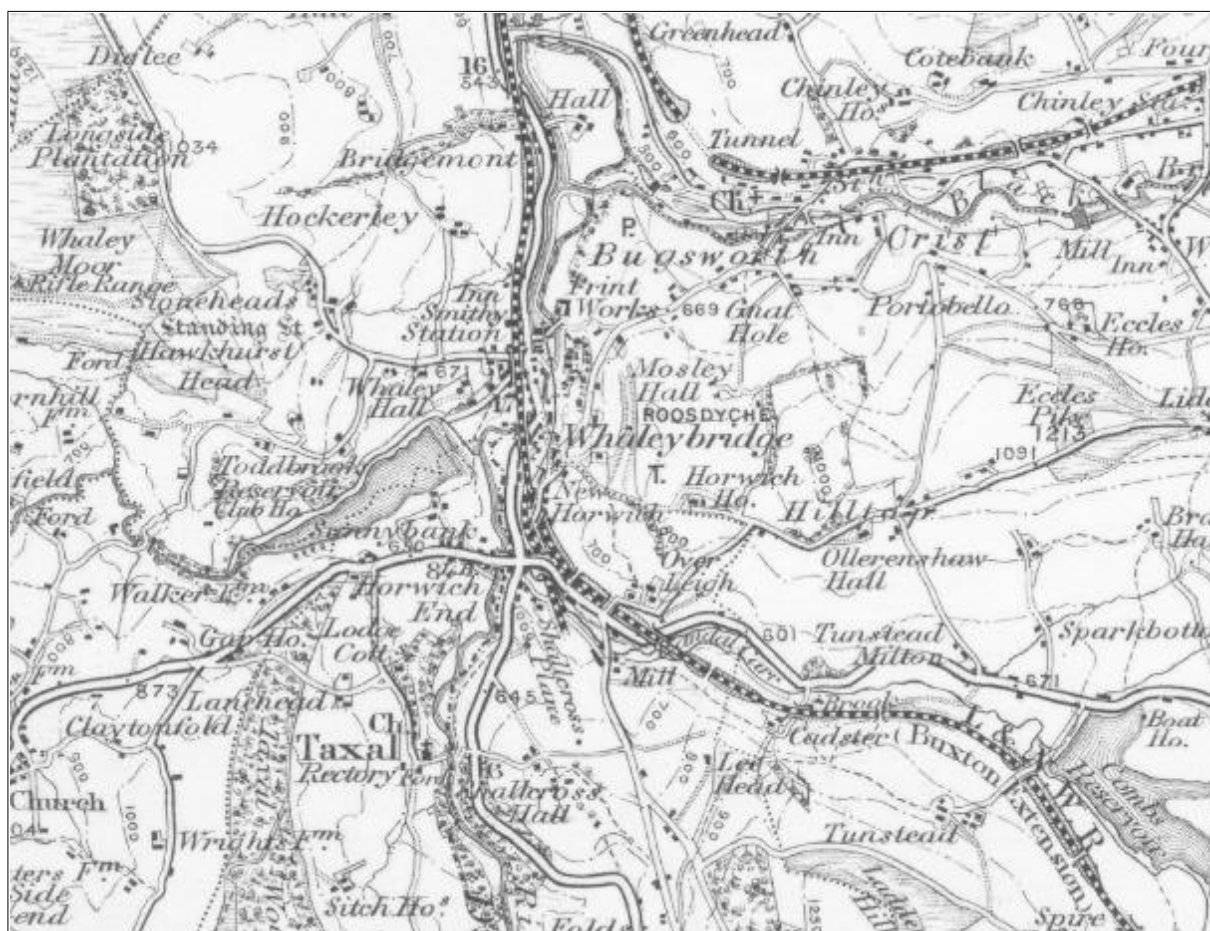
Following the death of John Bibbington, the business was run by trustees. His younger brother, Samuel, gave up farming, and turned to the lime trade. Samuel was followed by his son, Samuel Edmund, and grandsons Samuel William and John Edmund. The business operated as Samuel Bibbington Limited until the company was wound-up in 1941. The family left Bibbington Hall, which in the 1950s became a cafe.

John Wild of Leigh

John Wild was born in 1821. Censuses state his place of birth to have been Disley, Cheshire, which is near the border with Derbyshire. A newspaper obituary said he was born near Whaley Bridge in Derbyshire, which is in the vicinity of Disley. He was the son of John and Margaret Wild, and he was baptised at Taxall, Cheshire, also close to the Derbyshire border. The Wilds appear to have had a connection with Taxall because several of John's children were baptised there.

Wild's obituary said that father John had a lime boat, and that John junior captained it as a child. This must have been a family story, because it is otherwise undocumented.

John Wild married Hannah Ashton in Derbyshire in 1840. She was born in about 1823, in Bugsworth, Derbyshire. John's occupation was recorded as Labourer.



Map 15 – Bugsworth and Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire, and Taxall, Cheshire

The Wilds lived in Bugsworth throughout the 1840s, and into the early 1850s. John was recorded as being a Labourer there in the 1841 census, and had a small farm in the 1851 census.

John and Hannah had nine children: Sarah, born Bugsworth, 1842; Margaret, Bugsworth, 1846; Mary Ashton, Bugsworth 1848; Peter, Bugsworth, 1850; Ann, Bugsworth, 1852; John William, Leigh, Lancashire, 1854; George, Leigh, 1857; Ruth, Leigh, 1859; and Joseph, Leigh, 1861. Daughter Sarah died in 1857. Her death was recorded in Chapel-en-le-Frith, Derbyshire, though the family had moved to Lancashire by then.

John Wild and family had arrived in Leigh, Lancashire, by 1854. He is mentioned as a Lime Agent in advertisements placed in 1858 by John Bibbington of Rochdale. Wild's address was the Canal Wharf, Leigh, and he could supply scouring stones and Bath Bricks.



Map 16 – mid-nineteenth century Leigh, Lancashire

In the 1861 census his address was By Canal, Pennington, and he was a Lime and Flag Agent. Further advertisements during the early 1860s described Wild as a Lime Agent. The following advertisement indicates a connection to the Springfield Stone Quarry, though it is not clear whether this is the same quarry in the Leigh area which the Reads of Manchester operated.

WANTED, immediately, an active ENGINEER, for Springfield Stone Quarry.—Apply to JOHN WILD, Lime Agent, Leigh.

Leigh Chronicle and Weekly District Advertiser, 21st May 1864

Following the death of John Bibbington in 1865, John Wild described himself as a Lime Merchant rather than a Lime Agent. This suggests that he was trading in his own right by the mid 1860s, rather than as an agent of another business, in particular the trustees of John Bibbington.

Wild also marketed Peruvian Guano, which he sold from Leigh and could supply anywhere in Lancashire with a railway station. “As a manure, guano is a highly effective fertilizer due to its exceptionally high content of nitrogen, phosphate, and potassium: key nutrients essential for plant growth.” (Wikipedia)

PERUVIAN GUANO.
TO FARMERS AND OTHERS.

JOHN WILD & CO. beg respectfully to inform their friends and customers that they have received a first class lot of PERUVIAN GUANO, which can be had in any quantity at the Lime Depot, CANAL WHARF, LEIGH, or delivered in truck loads at any Railway Goods Station in Lancashire.

JOHN WILD & CO.,
LIME MERCHANTS, and Agents to Shaw & Co.,
Peruvian Guano Importers,
LEIGH.

Leigh Chronicle and Weekly District Advertiser, 7th April 1866

The business was sometimes referred to as John Wild and Co. in advertisements, and a Lancashire directory of 1869 lists Wild & Co. as Guano and lime merchants, at the Canal Wharf, Leigh. That was confirmed by John Wild's advertisements in 1871, though in the 1871 census he was recorded as being just a Lime Merchant, with a home address of No. 5 Chapel Street, Pennington, Leigh.

In 1871, not for the first time, John Wild saved a child from drowning in the canal.

RESCUED FROM DROWNING.—Our townsman. Mr. John Wild, lime merchant, King-street. Leigh, has again been instrumental in saving life. It has on several occasions been our duty to record heroic conduct on the part of this gentleman. We shall not be much wrong if we state that Mr. Wild has, by his energy and promptitude and at great inconvenience to himself, saved the lives of twenty children from a watery grave. On Sunday afternoon. shortly before five o'clock, a girl about eight years of age, daughter of John Ditchfield, of King-street, Leigh, was playing on the canal bank, opposite the Co-operative Corn Mill, when by some means or other she missed her footing and fell into the water. Her splashing attracted the attention of a number of females who were walking on the towing path opposite, and their cries "that a girl was in the water," reached the ears of Mr. Wild, who was in conversation with a gentleman, about 50 yards from where the girl was battling for life. Without waiting to undress, although he was attired in his Sunday clothing, Mr. Wild hastened to the spot, and seeing that the girl was about to sink, probably for the last time, he sprang into the water as he had often done before, and brought her safely to shore. She was then handed over to her friends and taken home, and is now out of danger. Had such conduct been observed in Liverpool, Manchester, or other principal towns, Mr. Wild would probably have long since been decorated with a medal from the Humane Society. The secretary of the Royal Humane Society has been communicated with, and requests the *written evidence of eye witnesses*. This can only be obtained if the parents of children who have been rescued will give their assistance. We shall be happy to receive any communications, and to take down the evidence of eye witnesses, in order that the facts may be brought under the observation of the Committee of the Society.

Leigh Chronicle and Weekly District Advertiser, 25th March 1871

In the following year, there was a fatal accident at Wild's stone quarry. This has been discussed already, because the quarry was occupied by the trustees of the late John Bibbington, but this lengthier report confirms that the quarry was sub-let to John Wild of Leigh, and that it was the source of material for rubbing stones.

FEARFUL ACCIDENT IN A STONE QUARRY NEAR WESTLEIGH. ONE MAN KILLED AND TWO INJURED.

An accident of a most frightful character, which resulted in the almost instantaneous death of one man and serious injury of two others, occurred at noon on Saturday last, at a stone quarry situate between Westleigh and Hindley Green. The quarry in question is in the occupation of the trustees of the late Mr. John Bibbington, of Manchester, who are also the occupiers of extensive stone and lime quarries in Derbyshire, and is situate in the township of Hindley Green, about half a mile from the Hindley Green Railway Station, and about two miles from the town of Leigh. It has been in work upwards of twenty years, and is consequently very extensive, the stone which is got from the quarry being principally rubbing stone. The working of the quarry is sub-let by the owners to Mr. John Wild, lime merchant, of Leigh, who employs about twenty men in this particular place.

The stone is drawn out of the quarry by means of a steam travelling crane, which, as many of our readers are aware, works on a frame round the edge at the top of the quarry. At the place where the accident occurred the delf is nearly thirty feet deep, and from this part it extends to a depth much more considerable. On Saturday morning about a dozen men were at work getting out the stone in various parts of the quarry, and about twelve o'clock a large iron box, in which the stone is placed by the men when got out, and which is capable of holding about a ton, was being drawn up to the surface. Before commencing to raise the stone it is customary for the engineer to caution the men below to keep clear. This had been done, and the operation of winding had just commenced, all being apparently clear, when, without any previous warning, the fore wheel of the iron carriage upon which the engine stands suddenly snapped in two, and the ponderous iron carriage, together with the boiler, engine, and crane, weighing altogether about fifteen tons, were precipitated into the delf below, a distance of some thirty feet. The engine driver, John Scott, when he found that the machine was going, seeing the danger he was in, jumped off and fell head foremost into the delf. A labourer, named William O'Brien, who was working just below the place, had unfortunately taken no heed to the warning to keep clear, but simply gone to the corner of the quarry, and he was caught by the cogwheel of the crane, which, in coming down, jammed his head against the side crushing it in a most frightful manner. The lower part of his body was clear, the bottom of the delf sloping inwards below the side, but he was knocked down, and one of the balance weights fell upon his legs. In its precipitate fall the boiler caught the side of the quarry, and was burst by the concussion, and a quarryman, named Patrick Murray, for whom O'Brien had been acting as labourer, who had not got far enough away was seriously scalded about the feet and lower part of the body by the hot water and escaping steam.

The other men, who were employed in the quarry, fortunately happened to be working in a different part at the time when the accident occurred, and consequently escaped injury. These men at once went to the assistance of their companions, and with Mr. Appleton, the manager, they rendered every possible aid to the sufferers. O'Brien was found lying insensible in the corner where he was knocked down with the balance weight upon his legs. He was extricated as quickly as possible, but was found to be beyond the reach of all human aid. Every care was bestowed upon him, but without avail, for the poor fellow died in about three minutes after he was extricated. The engine driver Scott was found lying in terrible agony a few feet from this spot, and Murray was also found near to the place. Dr. Evans, who happened to be passing along the road at the time, saw the accident, and made all haste to the scene. Having ascertained the nature of the injuries which the men had sustained, he rendered them what assistance lay in his powers and it is probably owing to his promptitude

that we are not called upon to record a greater sacrifice of human life. Scott was found to have sustained very severe injuries, one or two of his ribs being broken, and his body being very much mutilated. The poor fellow was soon afterwards removed in a cab, in the care of Mr. Topping, to the Manchester Royal Infirmary. Beyond being severely scalded, Murray was found to have sustained but slight injuries, and he having been carefully attended to by Dr. Evans, was removed to his home in Smithy-street, Leigh.

Intelligence of the disaster was sent to Mr. Wild, who was soon afterwards on the scene, and a telegram was also despatched to the manager for the owners of the quarry, who also arrived during the afternoon. The body of the deceased William O'Brien was removed to the Bowling Green Inn, Hindley, to await the coroner's inquest. The manager and the men employed in the quarry unite in testifying to the steadiness and general good character of the deceased. He was a young man, apparently not more than twenty years of age, and was unmarried. He had been in the employ of Mr. Wild about fifteen months, and resided at the time of his death in Black Horse-street, Bedford. John Scott, the engine driver, resided at Tammar-lane end near to the scene of the accident, and he is also said to have been very steady and to have borne an excellent character. Patrick Murray, who was severely scalded, resided in Smithy-street, Leigh, and has a wife and large family dependant upon him.

By this sad accident the working of the quarry will be stopped for some time to come, and it is estimated that the loss to the owners will be not less than £300, consequent on the breakage of the machinery. It is stated that the crane and the whole of the machinery had been examined a short time prior to the occurrence of the accident, and nothing was then observed to indicate that it was at all out of order, or that any danger was to be apprehended from its working. The quarry has now been worked upwards of twenty years, and during the whole of that time it has been carefully managed, as is evident from the fact that this is the first accident which has occurred there since the time that it was first opened.

News of the accident quickly spread throughout the neighbourhood, and the greatest alarm prevailed amongst the inhabitants of Westleigh and Hindley Green, until the result became known. On Sunday the scene of the disaster was visited by large numbers of persons from Leigh and the surrounding neighbourhood. Both the injured men are recovering favourably, but, it is feared that some considerable time must elapse before Scott can fully recover from the effects of the terrible injuries which he has sustained.

(Divided into paragraphs by the author.)

Leigh Chronicle and Weekly District Advertiser, 4th May 1872

The report confirms that Mr. Appleton was the manager of the quarry. James Appleton subsequently became the manager of a quarry in the same area operated by the Reads of Manchester, and his life and career has been discussed in the chapter relating to that family.

The census of 1881 recorded John Wild to be living at 5 Wild's Passage, Pennington, Leigh, and his occupation was Lime Merchant.

In a Leigh directory of 1885, he was listed as a Builders' Merchant, and also a Lath splitter, lime, cement and oil merchant, at the Canal Wharf, King Street, Leigh. Wild also placed an advertisement in the directory, which listed a wide range of products. Rubbing stones are not mentioned, though for most suppliers they were not a high-profile or principal product.

JOHN WILD,
BUILDERS' MERCHANT,
 MAKER OF PLASTERERS' LATHS.
Dealer in Buxton, Welsh, Clitheroe, Halkin, Blue Lias and Yorkshire Limes.
 PORTLAND, ROMAN, PARIAN AND KEEN'S CEMENT.
 Plasterer's Hair, Plaster of Paris, Paris White, Mineral White, Whiting and China Clay, Carbonic White for
 Mineral Water Manufacturers, Limestone and Spar Rockery, Limestone Chippings for Carriage Drives and
 Garden Walks, Pure White Spar Gravel for covering Graves, and every other kind of Building Material.
FOR PRICES, APPLY –
CANAL WHARF, LEIGH

Postal Directory of Bedford-Leigh, 1885

Hannah Wild died in 1887. The family's address at that time was Wild's Passage, King Street, Leigh.

John Wild died the following year, and an interesting obituary appeared in the local newspaper.

DEATH OF TWO WELL-KNOWN LEIGH TRADESMEN **MR. JOHN WILD.**

A well-known resident in Leigh passed away on Monday night in the person of Mr. John Wild, lime merchant, Leigh Bridge. Deceased had an apoplectic [sic] fit some eight years ago, and about three years since was seized with a paralytic stroke. Latterly he had grown much worse, and despite the active attentions of Dr. Jones he succumbed at a quarter to eleven on Monday night at the age of sixty-seven. He was born at Okerley Hall, near Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire, and when only eight years of age was captain of his father's lime boat, which plied to and fro on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal. About thirty-four years ago he came to Leigh, and soon afterwards commenced business as a lime merchant. He was a very strong swimmer, and during his long life had been instrumental in saving the lives of more than a dozen persons who had inadvertently fallen into the canal. His last rescue was effected about eight years ago, and on that occasion his gallantry was reported to the Royal Humane Society who expressed a wish to present Mr. Wild with the society's medal, but for some reason or other he declined to accept it. During the past eight years age and incapacity has somewhat unfitted him for the active performance of his professional duties, his affairs being managed by his son. In the pursuit of his calling he was always industrious and painstaking. He was well respected in the town and neighbourhood, and had many friends. In politics he was an extreme Radical, but he held aloof from an active participation in politics. He was not a member of any of the public institutions in the town, being domestic in his habits. His wife died some eight years ago, but he leaves three daughters and two sons. His son John William will probably carry on his father's business. The deceased gentleman was buried yesterday (Thursday) in Disley Churchyard, near Stockport.

Leigh Chronicle and Weekly District Advertiser, 24th August 1888

As forecast by the newspaper, John Wild's business was carried on by his son, John William Wild.

John William married Margaret Ann Wilcock in 1875. She was born in Leigh in about 1855. They had nine children in the following years: Peter, born in Leigh in 1875; Sarah Hannah, Leigh, 1877; Elizabeth Clara, Leigh, 1879; George, Wigan, 1881; Ruth, Wigan, 1883; Pauline, Wigan, 1885;

John William, Wigan, 1888; Percy, Wigan, 1890; and Sidney, Wigan, 1891. Son John William died in 1889.

The Wilds moved from Leigh to Wigan in the early 1880s. John William was first recorded as being a Lime Merchant in the 1881 Census. At that time, he was living at 6 Actons Walk, Wigan, Lancashire. Subsequently the Wilds lived in Darlington Street East, and then in Wallgate, Wigan.

Following the death of his father, John William placed this advertisement in 1888.

CANAL WHARF LEIGH.

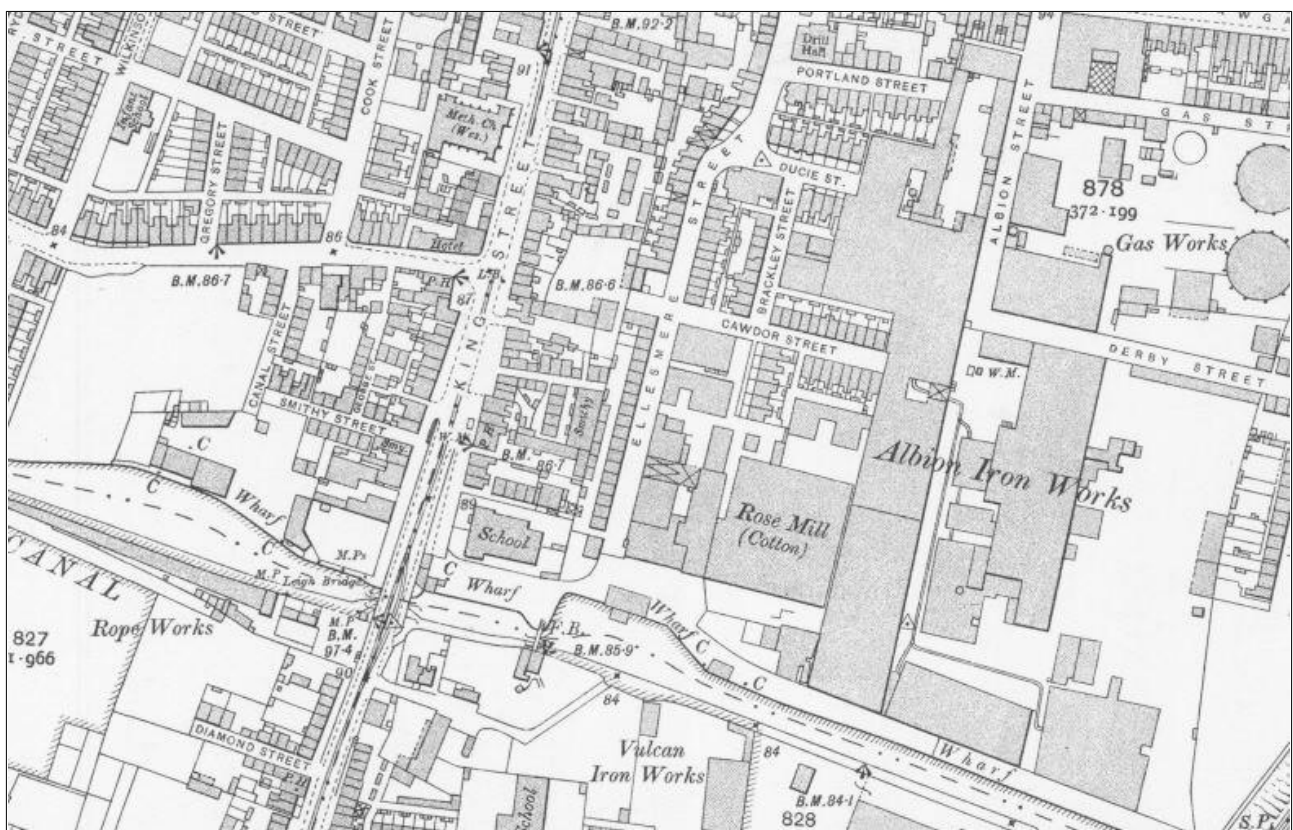
J. W. WILD

Begs to inform the Public that he is carrying on the business of his late father (John Wild) at the above address as

LIME, CEMENT, AND LATH MERCHANT.

ALL ORDERS WILL RECEIVE PROMPT ATTENTION.

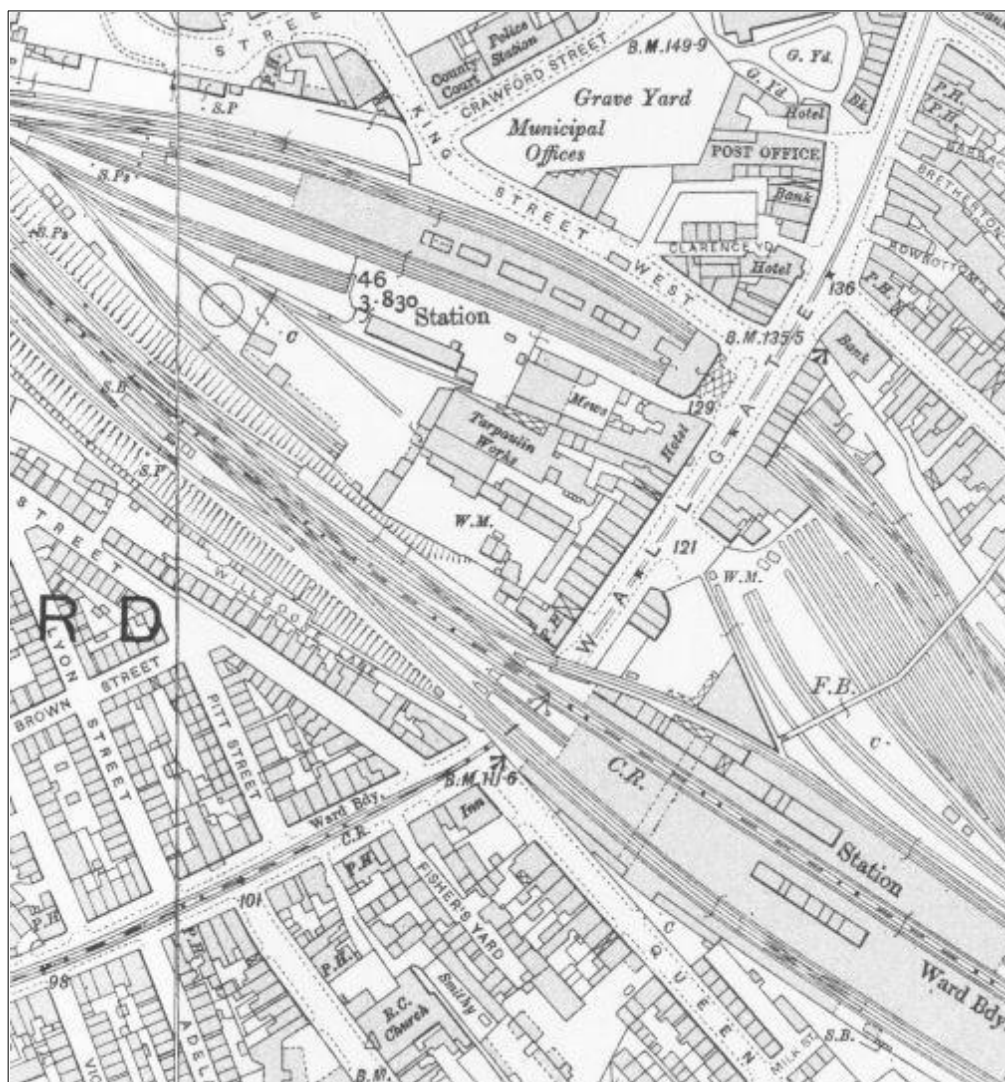
Leigh Chronicle and Weekly District Advertiser, 26th October 1888



Map 17 – King Street and Canal Wharf, Leigh, in the late nineteenth century

Though John William was living in Wigan, he still retained business premises in Leigh.

In the late 1880s and into the 1890s, John William was a Lime Merchant, Builders' Merchant, and Brick and Tile Merchant. Addresses included Wallgate and King Street West, in Wigan, and Brown Street in Leigh.

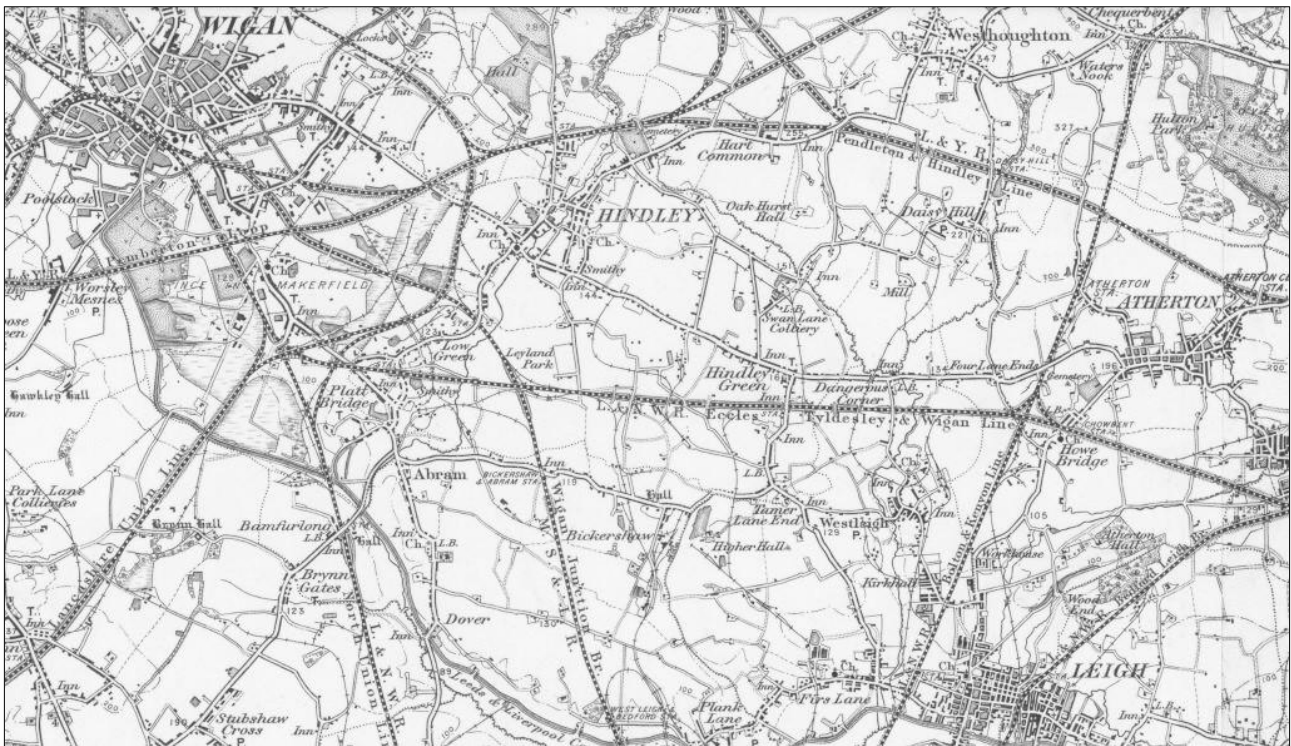


Map 18 – Wallgate and King Street West, Wigan, in the late nineteenth century

In the 1901 census, the Wilds were living at 4 Mesnes Park Terrace, Wigan, John William being a Builders' Merchant and Brick Manufacturer. Around this time, he entered into a partnership with Samuel Darlington of Leigh. They traded as "Wild & Darlington – Successors to Ranicar & Co.", advertising themselves as Monumental Masons, Flaggers, Slaters, and Builders' Merchants. They claimed to supply every description of marble, granite, and stonework, in the best of material and workmanship, at reasonable prices. They were also Dealers in Tomb Railing, Garden Rockery, and White Spar Gravel for Garden Walks. Their works and show yard were at Church Street, Leigh.

John William continued to advertise his core business separately. A Lancashire directory of 1905 lists him as a Builders' Merchant and Lime, Cement, and Slate Merchant at Brown Street, Leigh, and Barlow's Yard, Wallgate, Wigan, and as a Brick Manufacturer at Wigan Road, Atherton, with works in both Atherton and Pemberton. In parish records of 1908 and 1909, he gave his occupation as Builders' Merchant.

In the 1911 census, his address was recorded as being Hindley Green Hall, Hindley Green, near Wigan. Unfortunately I have been unable to identify a detailed history of the hall to confirm that the Wilds were resident there, and for how long. Sarah Hannah Wild gave Hindley Green Hall as her residence when she married in 1908, as did Elizabeth Clara and Ruth when they married in 1909.



Map 19 – Wigan, Hindley Green, Westleigh, Leigh, and Atherton in the late nineteenth century

The partnership with Samuel Darlington appears to have lasted over a decade, but it was dissolved by mutual consent in 1913

Legal Notices.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the partnership heretofore subsisting between the undersigned, JOHN WILLIAM WILD, SAMUEL DARLINGTON and JOHN SMITH, carrying on business as Stonemasons, Flag, Stone, Tile and Slate Merchants, at Church-street, Leigh, in the County of Lancaster, under the style or firm of "WILD and DARLINGTON," has been dissolved by mutual consent as and from the 30th day of June, 1913. All debts due to and owing by the said late firm will be received and paid by the said JOHN WILLIAM WILD, who will continue to trade separately in his own name at Church-street, Leigh, aforesaid. as a Builders' Merchant. The said SAMUEL DARLINGTON will continue to trade separately in his own name at Church street, Leigh, aforesaid, as a Slater, Tiler, Flagger and Stone and Monumental Mason.

Dated this, 26th day of November, 1913.

Signed by the said John William Wild, Samuel Darlington and John Smith, in the presence of George N. Gilroy, Solicitor, Leigh, Lancashire.

JOHN WILLIAM WILD.

SAMUEL DARLINGTON.

JOHN SMITH.

Leigh Chronicle and Weekly District Advertiser, 28th November 1913

As we have seen, John Wild was noted for his heroics in rescuing children from the canal in Leigh. Many years later, grandson Percy Wild, son of John William, also took part in a rescue in Ireland.

RESCUE FROM DROWNING BY A WIGAN OFFICER.—An exciting rescue from drowning was effected at Portrush on Tuesday afternoon last week. At the Salmon Rock, a bathing place much frequented by women and children because of the beautiful strand, a young lady named Murray, belonging to Belfast, got into difficulties. Observing what was happen. Percy Wild, of Wigan, rushed to her from Craigvara, a distance of 200 yards or more. Not taking time to divest himself of any of his clothing except the tunic, he went out into the deep water, and with the opportune aid of Mr. Wm. Clark, son of Mr. H. J. Clark, of Upperlands, succeeded in bringing Miss Murray to land. Mrs. Porrit, of Mark-street, Portrush, who had been bathing near at hand, and had gone to Miss Murray's assistance, also became imperilled, and she, too, was rescued by the same plucky couple. In a semi-conscious state Miss Murray was removed to Breen-na-Mara, the temporary residence of Major and Mrs. Rosborough, Belfast, where Dr. J. C. Martin, J.P., Dr. Jas. Lennox, J.P., Kilrea, and others, carried on artificial respiration. It was almost two hours before Miss Murray had fully recovered, and later in the evening she was motored to her cousin's home in Bushmills. Mr. Wild and Mr. Clark were warmly complimented on their prompt action. Mr. Wild is a son of Mr. J. W. Wild, builders merchant, of Wigan. He has received his commission as a second lieutenant in a Labour Battalion.

Wigan Observer and District Advertiser, 15th October 1917

John William Wild appears in several entries in a Lancashire directory of 1924. He was a Builders' Merchant at Wallgate, Wigan, and Church Street, Leigh. In addition, the directory confirmed that he was a Quarry Owner at Leigh Road, Hindley Green.

When wife Margaret Ann died in 1926, John William's address was Hindley Green House, Leigh Road, Hindley Green, indicating that the Wilds were no longer resident at Hindley Green Hall. Sadly John William died a month after his wife.

A WIGAN CONSERVATIVE.

The death occurred at Hindley Green House, Hindley Green, last evening, of Mr. John William Wild, a well-known Wigan builders' merchant and quarry owner. Seventy-two years of age, he was one of the oldest members of the Wigan Conservative Club, and was president of the Wigan Old Boys' Rugby Union Football Club. It is exactly a month yesterday since Mrs. Wild was accidentally killed by a light engine at Hindley Green station.

Liverpool Echo, 5th October 1926

It seems likely that eldest son Peter had some role in the business after his father's death, though probate was granted to younger brothers Percy and Sidney, and John Smith, a cashier. Peter had been a Clerk at the time of his marriage to Martha Hampson in 1900, and the 1901 census specified his occupation to be Builders' Merchant's Clerk. By 1911, Peter was a widower, living at Hindley Green Hall, and assisting in his father's business. He appears to have moved to Wigan by the 1920s, and died there in 1929.

Percy Wild had also been assisting in his father's business in 1911. He married Mary Blackburn Sayer in 1912. She was born in Pemberton, Lancashire, in 1890, and was the daughter of Richard Sayer and Rebecca Barker. Percy and Mary had three children, Margaret Sayer being born in Wigan

in 1912, Kathleen Mary also in Wigan (1920), and John Richard Wilcock in Wigan, in 1925. Wife Mary died in 1930. Percy married Florence Turner (born in 1906) in 1933. Florence and Percy had two children, Percy, who was born in Wigan in 1935, and James William, born Wigan 1937. Unfortunately John William died in 1942.

Probate records for John William and Margaret Ann Wild show that Percy was a Builders' Merchant in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In 1939 he was living at Hindley Green House, Hindley Green, and was a Brick Merchant with a Stone Quarry.

Alarm was caused when the following report appeared in a newspaper in 1944.

Killed

Glider Pilot John Richard Wild, son of Lieut.-Col. Percy Wild, M.C., Hindley Green House, Hindley Green, near Wigan.

Manchester Evening News, 20th October 1944

Fortunately the news was not as bad as feared. Wild's son proved to have been taken prisoner, and survived the war.

Glider Pilot John Richard Wild, aged 18, son of Lieut.-Colonel Percy Wild, M.C., of Hindley Green House, near Wigan, previously reported killed in action in Holland, is now reported to be a prisoner of war in Germany. His father has received a postcard from him.

Liverpool Echo, 24th November 1944

These reports confirm that Percy Wild continued living at Hindley Green House into the 1940s, and also that he had risen to the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and had been awarded the Military Cross (MC). "The MC is granted in recognition of "an act or acts of exemplary gallantry during active operations against the enemy on land" to all members of the British Armed Forces of any rank" (Wikipedia). It would be interesting to have more information about Percy Wild's distinguished military career, but as far as I can see, nothing is easily available online.

It appears that Percy Wild was active in local politics in the Wigan area, and served as Chairman of the Wigan Conservative Club for twenty-one years. This brief report mentions Wild's illness.

21 YEARS AS CHAIRMAN

A silver tea service has been presented to Lieut.-Colonel Percy Wild, M.C., on behalf of the members of the Wigan Conservative Club to mark his 21 years as chairman. The presentation was made by Alderman H. Farr, J.P. Owing to Colonel Wild's illness the gift was received by his son.

Liverpool Echo, 13th December 1949

Percy Wild died a few days after the presentation referred to in the report. The following year, a report about his estate also mentioned his interest in sport, and confirmed that the family business was still trading in the name of his father, J. W. Wild.

WIGAN SPORTSMAN'S £9,510

Lieut.-Colonel Percy Wild. M.C., of Haighlands, Haigh, Wigan, partner in J. W. Wild. builders' merchants, Wigan and Leigh, a director of the Wigan Rugby Football Club. Vice-president of the Wigan Cricket Club. a life member of Wigan Rowing Club and an ex-captain and director of Wigan Golf Club, left gross £9,510 gross, net £9,460.

Liverpool Echo, 15th August 1950

Probate had been granted to Percy's son, John Richard Wilcock, and brother Sidney, both described as Company Directors. The probate record confirmed that Percy's address was Haighlands, Haigh, near Wigan, so by 1949 he was no longer living in Hindley Green House.



Map 20 – late nineteenth century Hindley Green, showing Hindley Green Hall, Park Farm and quarries

Sidney Wild was also living at Hindley Green Hall, and assisting in his father's business, in 1911. He married Annie Knowles in 1915, and gave his residence as Hindley Green House, and his occupation was Merchant. Annie was the daughter of Edward Knowles and Mary Jane Shelmerdine, and was born in Wigan in 1890. The Wilds moved to Wigan, and were living at 306 Wigan Lane in 1939. Sidney's occupation was Builders' Merchant, presumably running J. W. Wild with brother Percy.

Despite rubbing or scouring stones rarely being mentioned in advertisements by the Wilds, this 1952 report confirms that they were still being produced, at Park Farm quarries, Hindley Green. Park Farm was on the same road as Hindley Green Hall, and Hindley Green House. The next road

was Nel Pan Lane, where the Reads of Manchester owned Hampson's Fold Farm, and the Reads' quarries must have been very close to those of the Wilds.

£3,000 Fire Quarry Building Burnt Out

Damage estimated at £3,000 was caused early this morning by fire which destroyed a large building used for the manufacture of scouring stones at the Park Farm Quarries, Hindley Green.

The works are owned by J. W. Wild, Ltd., builders merchants, of Wigan.

The alarm was given by a watchman at the Hindley Green Brick Company an adjoining works.

The fire began in the roof void where there is a false ceiling of plasterboard. The flames spread quickly and the roof collapsed before the arrival of the Atherton Fire Brigade.

The fire was first seen at 1 a.m. and four hours later the building was burnt out.

Liverpool Echo, 31st January 1952

By the 1950s, demand for rubbing or scouring stones was in decline. It is not clear whether the Wilds rebuilt the Hindley Green premises which had been destroyed by fire, or whether they decided to call a halt to rubbing stone production.

Summary

John Wild was born in Cheshire, or Derbyshire, in 1821. He moved to Leigh in the early 1850s, and acted as agent to John Bibbington of Rochdale, selling products such a scouring stones.

Following John's death, son John William carried on the business, as did his sons Percy and Sidney. The family business was known as J. W. Wild Limited into the 1950s.

In 1952, there was a fire at the rubbing stone premises at the Park Farm quarries, Hindley Green, and it is not known whether production subsequently resumed.

1960s Declining Demand

Formby, Lancashire, is not the first place most people would name if asked where donkey stones were used. Folk memory tends to associate use of donkey stones to clean and colour doorsteps with the grimy mill towns of industrial Lancashire and Yorkshire. Formby is on the Lancashire coast, and lacked the cotton mills and coal mines of the industrial towns and villages.

This 1967 article from the *Formby Times* was written by a journalist who had to research the subject of donkey stones at her editor's request. It appears that she started from a position of knowing nothing about them.

White stones - or none at all

COMPLETELY in a fog about what he was talking about, I followed the editor's request and went in search of information concerning donkey stones.

Their use was fast disappearing and I tried to find out what I could. Feeling a little sheepish I first went to Maddocks, a hardware store in Three Tuns Lane and asked the lady behind the counter for her help.

Confessing that I had never seen one, I asked her if she could elaborate on the commodity. For the benefit of younger readers I who like myself have never heard of them I will explain.

Apparently the stones. They come in dark brown, cream and white, were used after cleaning the stone steps of cottages to give them an attractive clean looking surface. Different methods were used but the main idea was to moisten the block, or step. and in circular movements cover the step with the coloured stone.

Some housewives left the circular patterns to dry as they were and others did not even bother to cover the step completely. thus leaving an intriguing pattern.

Known as donkey stones, dolly, stones or step stones, the use for them is not as great these days due to the modern tiled affair of modern houses.

Feeling a little more confident with what I was talking about I ventured into Hursts, whose hardware shop in Chapel Lane carries a large stock and enquired there if they sold these stones. They answered in the affirmative and told me that they sold four or five a week, but in some weeks sold none at all.

In both stores it was evident that these stones were not as easy to obtain as they once were, and this was put down to declining demand. Colours also presented a problem as the dark brown ones were more popular. These were often sold out long before the other colours, leaving the white stones on the wholesalers hands. He in turn would not order more until the white ones had been used. So it was a vicious circle, and housewives had either to buy white stones or wait until brown or other colours could be obtained.

Mainly older people buy these stones. I was told, and as there was quite a few cottages left in the district the need would continue.

Not only door steps are covered in this chalk but many old cottages also had flagged tiles inside, and these too had a daily "do."

Costing only 4d. from the shops, they used to be given by ragmen in exchange for rags.

One of the factories in Lancashire where these stones were manufactured recently closed down and this too has led to difficulties in the stockists obtaining them.

But progress has to go on and donkey stones will enter into antiquity for moderns to muse upon when they are old.

Jeanette

Formby Times 16th February 1967

"Jeanette" of the *Formby Times* was by no means the first journalist to express ignorance of donkey stones. I dare say that you might expect journalists based in Fleet Street to display their lack of knowledge, but the following piece was written by a Derbyshire journalist in 1924.

Every other day there came round a salesman who shouted "Donkey-stone or rubbing stone." This thoughtful and painstaking trader got me properly guessing. What I could not understand was why he should persist in trying to sell donkey-stone in a neighbourhood which to my certain knowledge enjoyed not the singular advantage of possessing donkeys. And even supposing each household kept its own donkey, of what possible use was the rubbing-stone. Was it for grooming them and keeping them in that fine glossy state for which donkeys are justly famous? It puzzled me to such an extent that I asked Mary why he should persist in this class of trade in a neighbourhood that was so singularly free of donkeys, if one excluded the two-legged variety, but she only laughed a subdued you-are-a-silly-old-fool sort of laugh, and said, "Get on wi' you." So even now I don't know, and do not care to venture a second inquiry.

Derby Daily Telegraph, 30th August 1924

To be perfectly clear, donkey stones are not for the purpose of cleaning donkeys. Donkey stoning is not a barbaric sport, carried on out of sight in remote areas of the North of England.

Summary

Though production of donkey stones was continuing on a commercial scale in the 1960s, demand had declined, and younger people knew little about them.

The reference to a Lancashire producer having closed recently is intriguing. I have seen on a website a claim that J. Meakin and Sons of Ashton Under Lyne, Lancashire, stopped production in the 1960s. It is possible that this is the "factory" referred to in the article.

Use of the term "factory" conjures up a vision of large-scale production of donkey stones. Makers never had premises on the scale of, say, a cotton mill. A large workshop, with space to store materials before processing, would be closer to the mark in most cases. However, Reads premises in Manchester appear to have been substantial, and could perhaps be described as a factory. At present I do not know when the Reads ceased production.

Eli Whalley of Ashton Under Lyne

The business founded in Ashton Under Lyne, Lancashire is said to have been the last commercial manufacturer of the rubbing or scouring stones generally known as donkey stones. Sources available online suggest that manufacturing started in the 1890s, and continued until 1979.



Map 21 – Ashton Under Lyne, Dukinfield, and Stalybridge

Eli Whalley was by no means the first maker or distributor of rubbing stones in Ashton Under Lyne, as this advertisement from 1856 demonstrates.

BARN FIELD COAL DEPOT

S. G. WALKER (late letter carrier), desires to acquaint his old friends and the public in general, that he has entered on those old-established Coal Premises, situated in Moss-street, Portland-street, opposite Eaton and Hollas's Stone yard, where he intends carrying on the business of Coal Dealer, and hopes by strict attention to business, and punctuality to all orders entrusted to his care, to merit a share of patronage and support.
N.B.–Dealer in Rags, Bones, Old Iron, Salt, Rubbing Stones, &c.

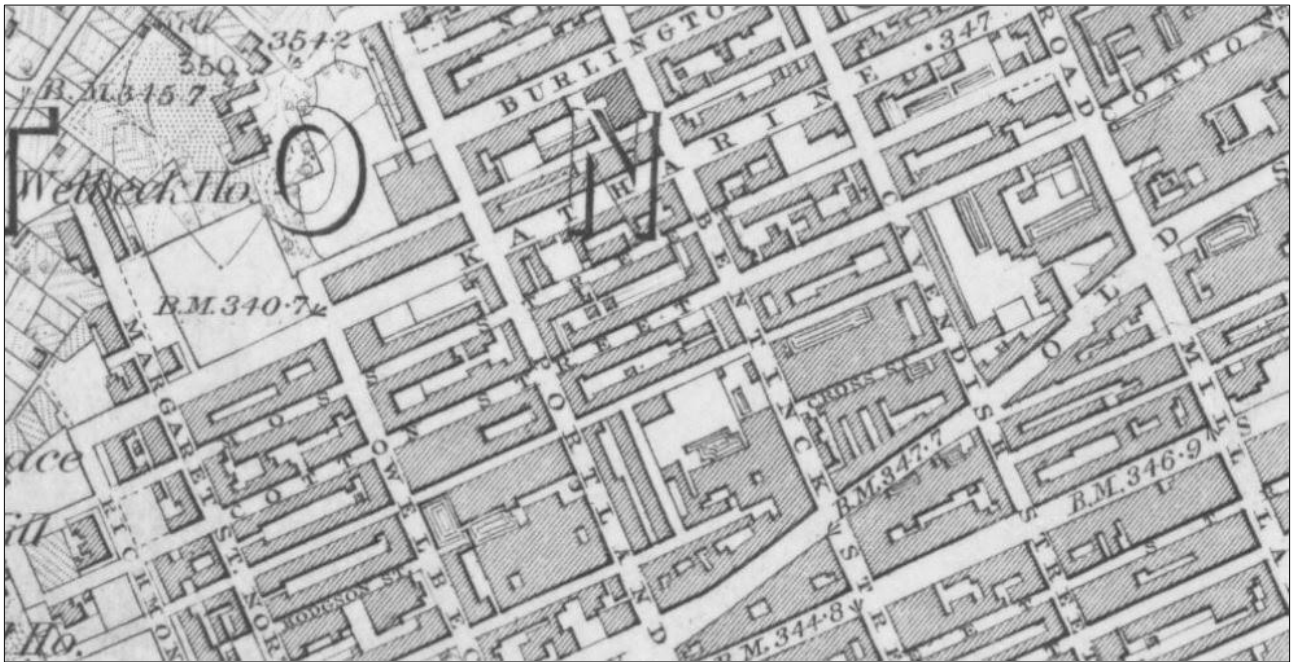
Ashton Weekly Reporter and Stalybridge and Dukinfield Chronicle, 25th October 1856

A Lancashire trade directory of 1858 lists Samuel Walker as being a Rag & Bone Dealer, and Coal Dealer, at Moss Street and Cotton Street, Ashton Under Lyne. These streets are shown on the mid-nineteenth century map on the following page.

Though it is usually stated that Eli Whalley started producing donkey stones in the 1890s, and that Ashton Old Wharf became known as Donkey Stone Wharf at that time, online sources are not clear as to how they know this. I will examine the evidence from other sources.

Eli Whalley, or Walley, was born in Dukinfield, Cheshire, in 1847. His father Henry was a Wheelwright. Eli's mother Jane died before 1851, and Henry remarried before the 1871 census was

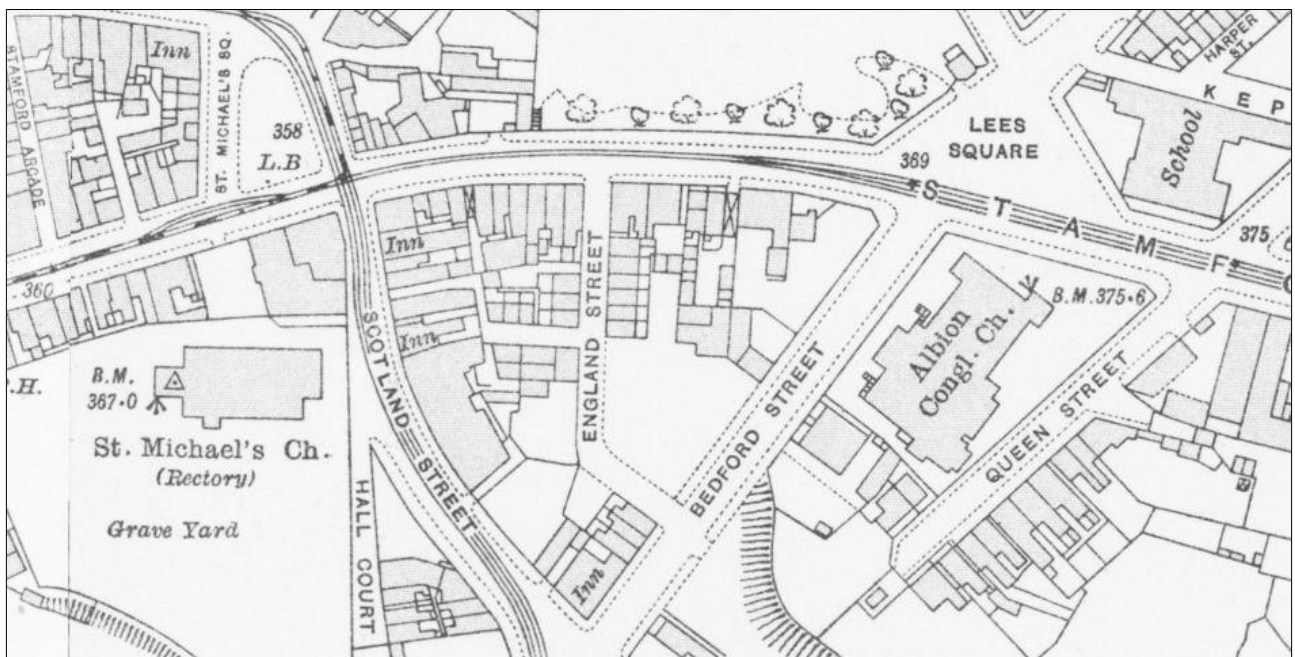
taken. In that census, the family was still living in Dukinfield, and Eli's occupation at the age of 23 was Blacksmith.



Map 22 – Moss Street, Cotton Street, and Portland Street, Ashton Under Lyne (mid 19th century)

In 1872, Eli Whalley married Frances Ann Nield. She was born in Ashton Under Lyne, Lancashire, in about 1850. They are known to have had five children, Amy Jane (born 1873), James Henry (1877), Eli (1882), Edward (1884), and Edith (1890).

An Ashton Under Lyne directory of 1878 identified Eli Whalley as a Blacksmith in England Street.



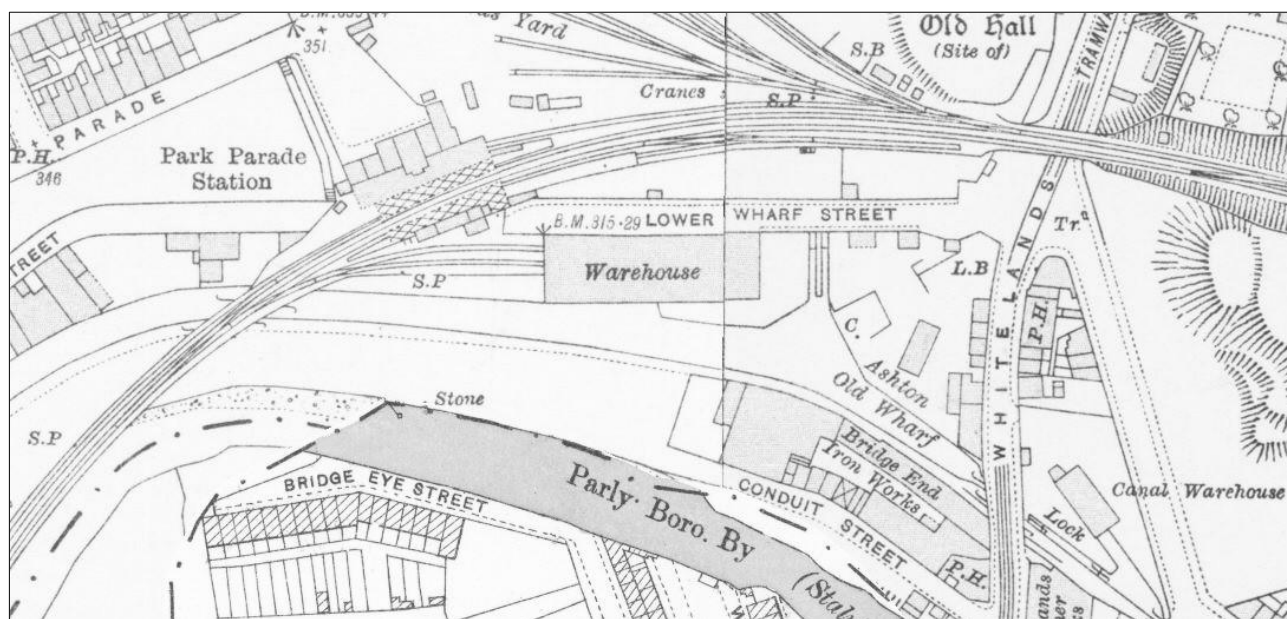
Map 23 – England Street, Ashton Under Lyne, Lancashire

Whalley's occupation is confirmed as Blacksmith by the censuses of 1881, 1891, and 1901, and a Lancashire directory of 1895. He died in 1903.

None of these records connect Eli Whalley to the manufacture of donkey stones. However, we have seen the example of Edward Read of Manchester, who was a Blacksmith and the son of a Wheelwright. Edward Read changed careers and began producing donkey stones while trading as a Salt and Sand Merchant. We have one clue that Eli Whalley may have done the same, and therefore may have commenced production of donkey stones, perhaps in the 1890s. When son Eli married in 1914, he gave his deceased father's occupation as Salt Merchant. This is by no means conclusive, but it fits the example set by Edward Read.

Following the death of Eli Whalley (senior), the business was carried on by his widow Frances Ann, who in 1911 was a Salt Merchant (employer), living at Whitelands. This was to the south of England Street, adjacent to Ashton Old Wharf, which became known as Donkey Stone Wharf. Frances Ann Whalley died in 1926. The 1921 census, when available, might confirm whether she retained a role in the business, though she would have been 71 years old by then.

In the 1901 census, James Henry Whalley and his younger brother Eli were 22 and 18 respectively, and both were described as Carters. They were living with the family in England Street. As Carters, it is possible that they had some role in the distribution of donkey stones. However, when their father died in 1903, they were described as Salt Merchants in the probate record. This seems to be the one time that James Henry was described as such. The 1911 census described him as a General Carter, and by 1939 he was a Horse Keeper Retired.



Map 24 – Whitelands, Ashton Old Wharf, and Lower Wharf Street, Ashton Under Lyne, Lancashire

Eli Whalley (junior) was born in Ashton Under Lyne in 1882. He would have been too young in the 1890s to have played a leading role in the manufacture of donkey stones. However, from 1903 onwards, he appears to have been involved in relevant trades. A directory of 1905 lists him as a Salt Merchant at England Street**, and in 1911 he was also a Salt Merchant at Whitelands, but a worker rather than an employer. It seems likely that he was still working for Frances Ann Whalley.

** It is possible that the Eli Whalley in the 1905 directory was intended to be the father rather than the son, even though Whalley senior died in 1903.

In 1914, Eli Whalley married Mary Hannah Hargreaves Lindop, daughter of Thomas Lindop. She was born in Staffordshire. Whalley's occupation was recorded as Salt Merchant.

Whalley was the victim of a crime in 1919.

Sentence of 14 days' imprisonment was passed on Joseph Cusick (17), Pitt-street, who along with Sidney Crowther (bound over) stole a watch from the office of Mr. Eli Whalley, of Whitelands. They broke into the premises, ransacked the drawers, and later threw the watch into the canal.

Manchester Evening News, 4th January 1919

A Lancashire directory of 1924 lists Eli Whalley as a Salt Merchant at Whitelands, and his mother's 1926 probate record confirmed the same occupation. A telephone directory of 1928 gives his address as Old Canal Wharf, Ashton, and his trade as "Salt, Stone".

A 2009 report by Oxford Archaeology North on "Lower Wharf Street, Ashton-Under-Lyne" provides additional details about donkey stone manufacturing at "Donkey Stone Wharf". The report is available online as a PDF for free download. It is well-illustrated with maps and photographs. It summarises the history of the business from the 1930s onwards as follows:

"A Mr Gilbert Garside entered into partnership with Eli Whalley and eventually took over the business in the 1930s, joined later by his son Harry. The company reached its peak during the 1930s when it was producing around 2.5 million donkey stones every year. In 1949 the company applied for membership of the Scouring Stone Manufacturers Association, a body which tried to maintain price levels and control the supply of stone from Northampton, but by 1973 production had shrunk to about 720,000 stones a year. The company still outlived all other manufacturers to become the worlds' [sic] last donkey stone manufacturer, remaining in business until 1979."

In 1939, Eli Whalley was still a Salt Merchant but was living at 56 Currier Lane, Ashton Under Lyne. It is not clear whether he had left donkey stones production in the hands of Gilbert Garside. Whalley moved to 390 Katherine Street, and died in 1958. The probate record does not mention an occupation, but Whalley was 75 when he died. His wife had died in 1940, and they appear not to have had children, so probate was granted to Whalley's sister Edith. As Edith Broadbent, she died in the Ashton area in 1980.

Gilbert Garside was the son of William Henry Garside and Priscilla Withnall. He was born in Waterloo, Lancashire, which is near Ashton Under Lyne, in 1907. His father was a Cotton Spinner.

Garside married Edith Harrison in 1935. (A copy marriage certificate would confirm Garside's occupation and address at that time.) Son Harry was born the same year, the birth being registered in Ashton. In 1939 the Gilberts were living at 744 Oldham Road, in Limehurst Rural District, which is between Oldham and Ashton Under Lyne. Gilbert's occupation was recorded as Coal & Coke Merchant.

Again, there is no documentary evidence to link Gilbert Garside with donkey stone manufacture, but we have the example of Samuel Walker in the 1850s, who was a Coal Dealer and Rag & Bone Dealer. Gilbert died in Bardsley, near Oldham, in 1987, so he lived to see the demise of commercial donkey stone manufacturing.

The Oxford Archaeology report mentions one other maker of rubbing stones based in the same part of Ashton as Whalley and Gilbert: “Eli Whalley’s works was not the only firm manufacturing within the study area. “Pony Brand” donkey stones were manufactured by a company trading as J Meakin and Sons on Lower Wharf Street”.

Unfortunately no dates have been given for J. Meakin and Sons. One website suggests that the Meakins’ business ceased trading in the 1960s. I have been unable to identify the correct “J. Meakin” in censuses or directories.

Summary

Making and dealing in rubbing stones began in Ashton Under Lyne before Eli Whalley entered the trade. For many years he worked as a Blacksmith, but it is possible that he changed trades during the 1890s. His son’s marriage record confirms that he had become a Salt Merchant by the time of his death in 1903, and we have the example of Edward Read of Manchester, who was a Salt Merchant and maker of “Donkey Brand” rubbing stones.

Frances Ann Whalley ran the business for a number of years, but son Eli took over, and entered into partnership with Gilbert Garside.

At some point, possibly the 1930s but perhaps later, Garside took over manufacturing of donkey stones. Though he was recorded as being a Coal & Coke Merchant, making donkey stones became an important part of his business. Under Harry Garside production carried on until 1979.

Items used by Whalley and Garside in the manufacturing of donkey stones are on display at:

Portland Basin Museum,
Portland Place,
Ashton Under Lyne,
OL7 0QA

1980s Revival

A number of advertisements were placed in Scotland's *Dundee Courier* in the mid-1980s, in which the availability of donkey stones was proclaimed. It seems likely that donkey stone in this case was being used as a generic term for rubbing stones, rather than indicating that a supply of Read's Donkey Brand rubbing stones had been discovered.

DONKEY stones for whitening door steps in stock at last. 36p each, at Ruthvens. 289 Brook Street. Broughty Ferry Telephone Dundee 77351.

Dundee Courier 21st February 1986

Apparently the stones on sale in Dundee were from an unspecified source in Lancashire.

AT last, ladies the news you have been waiting for, we have just received from darkest Lancashire a delivery of donkey stones/rubbing stones for whitening your doorstep. Please form an orderly queue at Ruthvens. 289 Brook Street, Broughty Ferry. Dundee 77351. Open all day today.

Dundee Courier 16th April 1986

As a follow up to the advertisements, the *Dundee Courier* published a feature article on donkey stones.

DONKEY stones suddenly seem to be coming back into fashion in Dundee! And for those who don't know these once-common household aids by that name, Dundee folk sometimes called them cam stones.

A donkey or cam stone is used for whitening the old-fashioned stone doorsteps that are still to be found outside many older Dundee properties, and over the years they had entirely disappeared from the shops in the city.

However, Mr Tony Vile of Ruthvens, the ironmongers in Broughty Ferry, tells me that he recently discovered a source for obtaining donkey stones in Lancashire. and recently took delivery of six dozen of the stones only to be sold out within three weeks. His latest supply of double that amount is going fast.

"Frankly, I was amazed," he tells me. "I've been in this business for seven years, and I've been asked for these stones off and on over that period. I discovered my source when I was on holiday in Kendal last year.

"The chap who makes them is in his 70s and says he's not passing on the secret until he dies."

Mr Vile tells me that the stones seem to be some form of cement compound with one or two secret ingredients. "They're about twice the size of a tablet of toilet soap and cost 42p a time," he says.

"I've asked various customers exactly how these stones are used and have heard conflicting accounts. Some say you rub the step with the stone and then scrub it with water. Others say you scrub the step first and then rub it while it's wet.

"However, I'd be interested to know how these stones came to be called by these names, and if cam stone IS the name they were best known by in Dundee."

Dundee Courier 18th April 1986

Unfortunately the Lancastrian maker of the rubbing stones is not named. As for the name "cam stone", I have been unable to confirm whether this was used for rubbing stones in Dundee, or Scotland in general. The question was asked by the newspaper, but it remained unanswered in the follow-up article.

Donkey stones

A BROUGHTY FERRY reader has contacted me on the subject of how donkey stones came to be known by such an unusual name.

She tells me that she remembers them well from her youth in the north of England, and 'Donkey' was in fact their brand name.

"Each stone was about half the size of a brick and had a picture of a donkey on the top of it," she tells me.

Another reader wonders if they were known as donkey stones because it was such hard work cleaning the steps. "Doing the donkey work generally refers to particularly hard preparatory work of some kind and I wonder if there is any connection with that?"

Dundee Courier, 23rd April 1986

Production into the Twenty First Century

Though the last commercial-scale maker of donkey stones ceased production in 1979, the *Manchester Evening News* reported on 16th February 2007 that there was still small scale production, and that they were still available in Ashton Under Lyne.

THE old donkey stone - used to scrub and colour doorsteps 100 years ago - is alive and kicking in the 21st century. They're selling like hot cakes on Ashton under Lyne indoor market.

Gerald Buckley still sells the donkey stones at his family business, Bailey's Hardware, in the indoor market at Ashton.

Mr Buckley said: "You never used to buy a donkey stone. The rag and bone man would give you one in return for any old items and would ask you what colour you wanted. We still have people in here asking for them, especially people living in weaver-type cottages in Mossley and Glossop who use them to clean their steps.

Maker Chris Fawcett, from Colne, Lancashire, said: "I make about a hundred dozen a year and people still use them to clean steps and farm houses that have porches."

Donkeystone Name Lives On



I was amused to discover that a Saddleworth craft brewery has adopted the name "Donkeystone Brewing Co.", uses a form of donkey stone as its logo, and includes illustrations of donkeys on several of its products.

The brewery is based at the following address:

Units 17/18,
Boarshurst Business Park,
Boarshurst Lane,
Greenfield ,
Saddleworth, OL3 7ER

If you do not know of a local outlet for its craft beers, the brewery's website is www.donleystonebrewing.co.uk, and it can be found on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/Donkeystonebrew>.

Summary

Production of donkey stones continued on a small scale into the twenty first century, but many people need an explanation of what they were used for.

Demand in recent decades has been very limited, and most people no doubt regard donkey stones as being a curiosity of the distant past. Those who want to learn more can see exhibits in museums, in particular the display of Eli Whalley's manufacturing equipment at Portland Basin Museum, Ashton Under Lyne.

People might be prompted to think about donkey stones while enjoying a craft beer from Donkeystone Brewing Co.

Conclusion

I have survived writing this history, and am no more a donkey stone anorak than when I started. However, the premises of Thomas Read and Edward Read were in parts of Manchester with which I am familiar, and the next time I am in those areas I will be looking out for where the Reads lived and worked. Hopefully the nice pubs and bars will survive the Covid-19 pandemic, so I can sit with a pint in them and think to myself “Thomas Read lived next door”, or “Edward Read had a beerhouse just over the road”.

I seem to have redefined “brief”, but more information kept coming to light as I was writing. I have also taken account of feedback received after I circulated the first version of this history. My aim was to present more information than you would get from a Google search. I hope I have answered some of the questions which come to mind when you look at some of the webpages which discuss donkey stones. In particular, I have tried to record the lives of some of the people who made and sold the stones.

To write a comprehensive history of donkey stones would require a lot more time and expense. I cannot spare the time – I must move on to the next project – and I am not prepared to incur expense to prepare a history which I am distributing free of charge.

Searching newspaper archives produces thousands of results, many of which are relevant, but many are not. I have been selective, but perhaps someone will find the time to review all results in order to produce a detailed history. It is also likely that more newspapers will be added to the archives, and relevant articles will become available.

Some of the unresolved issues in respect of families such as the Reads could probably be resolved by purchasing copy birth, marriage, and death certificates. I cannot justify the cost, but hope that this history comes to the attention of someone who has done to to construct their own family tree. I would be pleased to update my text if anyone can provide additional information, and I will review this history if those who know better can point to any errors.

Finally, I am satisfied that the whitening of doorsteps by Lancashire housewives was not the result of a practice introduced by Flemish weavers.

The journalist who made the suggestion no doubt did so in good faith, but it reminds me of the saying attributed to Mark Twain: “Never let the truth get in the way of a good story”.

It seems possible that knowledge of Flanders Brick or Tile led to an association of that product with rubbing stones in the mind of the author. Perhaps there was an assumption that importing of Flanders Brick was as a result of the settlement of Flemish weavers in Britain, and Lancashire in particular?

Alternatively, did the author have knowledge of the use of scouring stones to clean stone flags in Lancashire’s mills? Several authors have made a link between the settlement of Flemish woollen weavers in Lancashire, often said to have been in the fourteenth century, and the later development of the cotton spinning and weaving industry. Was there a process of evolution whereby Flemish weavers introduced the use of scouring stones, which then were used to clean the stone flags and steps in mills, finally being adapted for general household use?

Did Flemish weavers have the contacts to import scouring stones from their homeland, or the time and ability to operate quarries and manufacturing facilities in Lancashire? I think not.

The simple answer is that Flemish weavers had no role whatsoever in the introduction of scouring or rubbing stones to Lancashire. The reason is that there was no significant settlement in Lancashire by Flemish weavers.

This matter was dealt with by A. P. Wadsworth, M.A., in 1942, when he presented a paper to the Rochdale Literary and Scientific Society entitled *The Myth of the Flemish Weavers*. The gist of Wadsworth's paper is that Flemish weavers cannot take the credit for various innovations in Lancashire because they did not settle in the county in sufficient numbers to have had any influence on daily life.

At the time of presenting the paper, Wadsworth was a journalist, and he became editor of the *Manchester Guardian* (now simply *The Guardian*) two years later. If I understand correctly, Wadsworth's paper is still in copyright for a few more years, so it cannot be distributed in full as it deserves to be. (It is difficult to track down in libraries or archives, but the Lancashire Record Office in Preston had a copy.)

As the myth continues to be repeated on websites, and even more innovations are credited to the legendary Flemish weavers, I am preparing my own paper, for free distribution in Facebook groups.

Coming soon!

What Did The Flemish Weavers Ever Do For Us?"

